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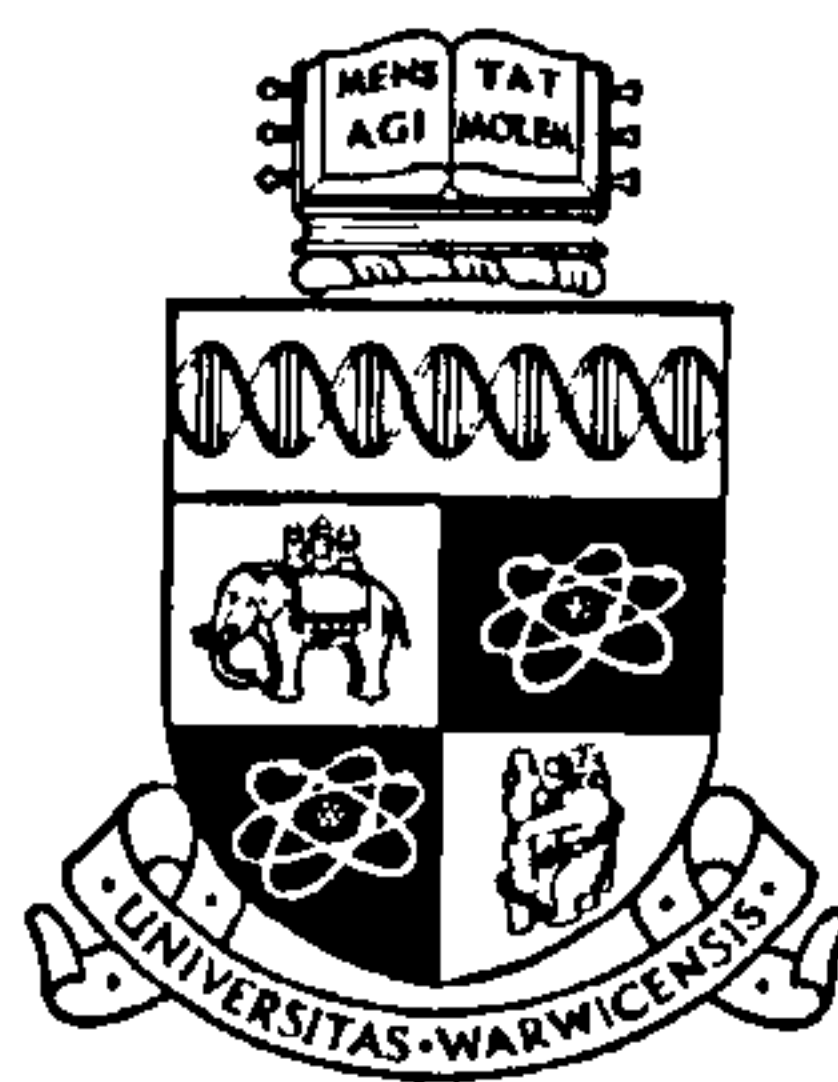
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# **Women Managers in Thailand: Cultural, Organizational and Domestic Issues**

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**THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK**  
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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

	<b>Page</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	viii
<b>LIST OF CHARTS</b>	ix
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	x
<b>DECLARATION</b>	xiii
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	xiv
<b>CHAPTER</b>	
<b>I. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY</b> ... ..	1
The Case of Thailand ... ..	1
The Research Objectives ... ..	3
The Need for the Study ... ..	4
The Three major themes of the Study ... ..	6
The Significance of the Study ... ..	10
The Structure of the Study ... ..	11
<b>II. THAILAND: HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE</b> ...	15
INTRODUCTION ... ..	15
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND ... ..	16
Population and Demography ... ..	19
Chinese immigrant manpower:The ethnic division of labour ... ..	20
Women’s position in Thai history and culture... ..	23
SOCIO/CULTURAL FRAMEWORK ... ..	28
Religion ... ..	28
Thai People and Unique Thai Values ... ..	33
Research on Thai Values ... ..	37
THAI CULTURE: ITS IMPACT ON MANAGERIAL PRACTICE	41
HOFSTEDE’S STUDY ON CULTURAL VALUES ... ..	42
Power Distance ... ..	42
Uncertainty Avoidance ... ..	43
Individualism ... ..	45
Masculinity ... ..	47
TROMPENAARS’ STUDY ON CULTURAL VALUES ... ..	50
Universalism vs. Particularism ... ..	51
Individualism vs. Collectivism ... ..	52
Neutral vs. Emotional ... ..	53
Specific vs. Diffuse ... ..	54
Achievement vs. Ascription ... ..	56
MAIN FEATURES OF THAI MANAGERIAL PRACTICE ...	58
Principal Characteristics of Business Organizations in Thailand ...	59
Human Resource Strategies employed by Firms in Thailand ...	60
SUMMARY ... ..	65
<b>III. THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN THAI SOCIETY</b> ... ..	68
INTRODUCTION ... ..	68
WOMEN AND INDUSTRIALIZATION IN ASIA ... ..	68
Women Managers in Southeast Asia ... ..	72

THAI WOMEN: EDUCATION AND LABOUR MARKET PARTICIPATION	76
Women's education patterns in Thailand ... ..	76
Women and Work in the Thai Economy ... ..	79
Factors that account for high female economic activity ... ..	80
Legal and Institutional aspects of women's employment ... ..	83
THE DEVELOPING ECONOMY AND THAI WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT ...	84
Thai Women in Industry ... ..	87
Women's working hours and earnings ... ..	91
THAI WOMEN IN MANAGERIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE POSTS	92
Women in the Civil Service ... ..	95
Women in Politics ... ..	101
Women in the Private Sector ... ..	103
SUMMARY ... ..	104
 <b>IV. A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>107</b>
Women Managers: Similarities across countries ... ..	107
Women Managers: Differences across countries ... ..	109
WOMEN MANAGERS: WHERE ARE THEY IN MANAGEMENT, AND WHY	111
Participation of Women in the Labour Force ... ..	111
THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT ...	112
Occupational Distribution of Women in Management ... ..	114
A Profile of Women in Management ... ..	115
EXPLANATIONS FOR WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN MANAGEMENT	118
Parental Occupation: Social Class ... ..	119
The Influence of Siblings ... ..	120
Identification with father and/or mother ... ..	121
Education ... ..	123
WOMEN'S WORK VERSUS HOME RESPONSIBILITIES ...	125
The Effects of Family on Women's Career Development ... ..	127
BARRIERS ENCOUNTERED BY WOMEN MANAGERS ...	129
THE GENDER-CENTRED PERSPECTIVE ... ..	130
Personality Differences ... ..	131
Leadership/Management Styles ... ..	136
Motivation ... ..	138
Fear of Success ... ..	139
An assessment of the gender-centred perspective ... ..	141
THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE PERSPECTIVE ...	142
Women's Occupational Segregation ... ..	143
Women as 'tokens' ... ..	144
Informal Networks ... ..	148
Mentoring ... ..	149
An analysis of the Organizational Structure Perspective ... ..	150
THE ORGANIZATION PROCESSES PERSPECTIVE ...	152
Recruitment and Selection of Women as Managers ... ..	152
Promoting Women as Managers in Masculine Organizations ...	153



Limited Access to Training and Developmental Opportunities	...	156
Pay Differentials	... ..	156
Performance Appraisal	... ..	157
An analysis of the Organization Processes Perspective	... ..	158
SUMMARY	... ..	160
<b>V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</b>	... ..	163
FEMINIST CRITIQUES OF RESEARCH ON GENDER AND WORK		163
THE THAI SITUATION	... ..	166
RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS.	... ..	167
Why study middle managers?	... ..	170
Choice of Firms	... ..	171
Data Collection Instruments	... ..	171
PHASE I:THE QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY	... ..	173
Translating the questionnaire	... ..	179
Piloting the questionnaire	... ..	180
Subject selection: The Private Sector	... ..	180
Subject selection:The Public Sector	... ..	182
Mailing and Follow-up of questionnaires	... ..	182
Data Analysis	... ..	183
PHASE II:INTERVIEWS WITH WOMEN MANAGERS	... ..	184
Selection of Women for Interviews	... ..	190
Research Note on Interviews	... ..	191
PHASE III:INTERVIEWS WITH HR/LINE MANAGERS	... ..	192
Selection of HR/Line managers for interviews	... ..	198
SUMMARY	... ..	199
<b>VI. THAI MALE AND FEMALE MANAGERS</b>	... ..	201
WHO ARE THE THAI MALE AND FEMALE MANAGERS?	... ..	201
Age	... ..	202
Marital Status/Children	... ..	202
Spouses' Employment...	... ..	203
Religion	... ..	202
Ethnic Background	... ..	204
Education	... ..	204
EXPLANATIONS FOR MALE AND FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN MANAGEMENT	... ..	206
Family Background/Upbringing	... ..	207
PRESENT EMPLOYMENT	... ..	208
Length of Time in Present Organization	... ..	208
Number of Employers	... ..	209
Time spent in present positions	... ..	209
Managerial appointments	... ..	210
Occupational Specialization	... ..	210
Hours worked per week	... ..	211
Remuneration	... ..	212
Discussion	... ..	212
Thai Female Managers: A Profile	... ..	213

<b>GENDER DIFFERENCES IN ORGANIZATION OF HOUSEHOLD</b>								
	<b>TASKS</b>							<b>214</b>
Household Division of Labour	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	215
Leisure Activities	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	217
Conflicts	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	217
Discussion	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	220
<b>CAREER PROGRESS AND BARRIERS</b>								<b>220</b>
<b>GENDER-CENTRED BARRIERS</b>								<b>221</b>
Motivators	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	221
Styles of Management	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	222
Other gender-related barriers	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	223
<b>ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE BARRIERS</b>								<b>224</b>
Mentors	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	224
Sex Differences in Decision Making Authority	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	225
<b>ORGANIZATION PROCESSES BARRIERS</b>								<b>227</b>
Training/Self Development Courses	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	228
Career Progression	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	228
Attitudes towards having managers and subordinates of the opposite sex								229
Are men and women treated equally in organizations?								230
Strategies women should employ in their role as managers								232
Discussion	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	234
<b>SUMMARY</b>								<b>236</b>
<b>VII. INTERVIEWS WITH WOMEN MANAGERS</b>								<b>262</b>
Who are the interviewees?								262
<b>EXPLANATIONS FOR WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN</b>								
	<b>MANAGEMENT</b>							<b>264</b>
Family Background	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	264
Education	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	268
<b>WOMEN MANAGERS AND THEIR FAMILIES</b>								<b>273</b>
Marriage	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	273
Spouses' Careers	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	274
Husband's attitude towards his wife's employment								276
Children	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	279
Household Division of Labour	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	281
<b>CAREER PROGRESS/BARRIERS</b>								<b>288</b>
Career Histories: Women in the Public Sector								288
Career Planning	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	289
Career Histories: Women in the Private Sector								290
Career Planning	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	292
Present Job	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	292
Factors influencing career success								292
Promotions	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	293
Mentors	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	298
Training and Development	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	299
Managerial Activities/Relationships	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	301
Management Style	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	302
Gender Preferences of Women Managers								304
Acting like a man	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	308



BARRIERS	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	309
Gender-centred barriers	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	310
Organizational Structural Barriers	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	315
Organization Processes Barriers	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	318
Future Directions for Thai Women Managers...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	322
SUMMARY	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	324
<b>VIII. INTERVIEWS WITH HR/LINE MANAGERS</b>	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	327
Some problems encountered during interviews	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	327
<b>HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICES IN FIRMS</b>	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	328
Recruitment and Selection in Private Firms	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	329
Promotion from within	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	332
Informal Networks	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	332
Recruitment and Selection in the Public Sector	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	333
Promotion from within	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	334
Other differences between firms in HR practices	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	334
<b>THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT</b>	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	335
Respondents' explanations for women's representation in management	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	337
Hazards of Promoting Women as Managers	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	338
<b>GENDER-CENTRED PERSPECTIVE</b>	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	339
Women have inadequate technical skills	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	339
Women's lack of geographical mobility	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	340
Women lack drive and motivation for management	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	340
How far can women in management go?	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	341
<b>ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE PERSPECTIVE</b>	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	343
New opportunities for women in organizations	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	343
Attitudes towards women in management	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	344
Problems - Anticipated and Actual	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	352
<b>ORGANIZATION PROCESSES PERSPECTIVE</b>	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	356
Training	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	356
Assessment of Managers in terms of Performance	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	358
Promotion	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	359
<b>COMMENTS FROM HR/LINE MANAGERS ON THE GLASS CEILING</b>	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	360
SUMMARY	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	361
<b>IX. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	363
<b>THE REPRESENTATION OF THAI WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT</b>	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	363
<b>WORK VERSUS FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES</b>	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	368
<b>BARRIERS TO PROGRESSION</b>	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	369
Gender-centred barriers	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	369
Organizational Structure barriers	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	370
Organization Processes barriers	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	372
Women's perception of barriers in the public and private sectors	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	373
How Thai women managers differ from their Western counterparts	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	374
Recommendations for future research...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	377
<b>REFERENCES</b>	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	379

**APPENDIX**

Cover Letter for Survey Questionnaire	...	...	...	...	401
Questionnaire for Male and Female Managers	...	...	...	...	402
Interview Schedule for Women Managers	...	...	...	...	409
Interview Schedule for HR/Line Managers	...	...	...	...	412
Respondent's Profile: Women Managers	...	...	...	...	415
Respondent's Profile: HR/Line Managers	...	...	...	...	417
List of Organizations Participating in the Study	...	...	...	...	418



## LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		Page
3.1	Number of graduates from public and private universities by type of degree and gender, 1991.	77
3.2	Number of graduates in selected social science fields at public universities by gender in 1991	78
3.3	Employed Population by Industry - Whole Country (1992)	86
3.4	Administrative, managerial and executive workers by gender, 1992	94
3.5	Number of Civil Servants by level and gender, 1990	97
3.6	Distribution of senior executive civil servants by ministry and sex, 1993	100
3.7	Distribution of women and men in various types of political positions, 1993-1994	102
6.1	Mean Scores for Motivation to Work	260
6.2	Rankings of Important Motivators by Respondents in the Two Sectors	261
7.1	Subject of Education for first degree qualification (in number)	271
8.1	Which sex responds more to these recruitment methods?	329
8.2	Criteria used for selecting managerial applicants (in percentage)	330
8.3	Problems - Anticipated and Actual	352
8.4	Work Performance of Male and Female Managers	358

## LIST OF CHARTS

CHART		Page
6.1	Age ... ..	240
6.2	Marital Status ... ..	241
6.3	Field of Study for Bachelors Degree ... ..	242
6.4	Length of Time in Present Organization ... ..	243
6.5	Length of Time in Present Position ... ..	244
6.6	Occupational Specialization ... ..	245
6.7	Hours Worked Per Week ... ..	246
6.8	Present Level of Gross Annual Remuneration ... ..	247
6.9	Household Help ... ..	248
6.10	Hours Spent by Respondents on Household Activities	249
6.11.	Hours Spent by Respondent's Spouse on Household Activities ... ..	250
6.12	Leisure Activities ... ..	251
6.13	Training/Self Development Courses ... ..	252
6.14	Career Barriers ... ..	253
6.15	Authority to make the Final Decision ... ..	254
6.16	Career Progress within the next 3-5 years ... ..	255
6.17	Gender Preferences for Managers of respondent's own sex	256
6.18	Gender Preference for Male or Female Subordinates ... ..	257
6.19	Rating of Respondent's Firm as a Place for Women to Work ... ..	258
6.20	Agreement with Strategies Women Managers should Employ ... ..	259

Woman is the glory of all created existence;

But you, Madam, are more than woman!

Richardson

This thesis is dedicated to

**Ellen McTighe**

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Patricia Arttachariya,  
Warwick Business School,  
Coventry.

April, 1997.

## DECLARATION

No portion of this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification from this University or any other Institute of Learning

*Pahina Atcharya*

April, 1997.

## ABSTRACT

The main objective of this exploratory study was to add to the almost non-existent Thai literature on women in management. Three key themes were pursued throughout the study, i.e., the representation of Thai women in management, their work versus family responsibilities, and the barriers they encounter in ascending the managerial hierarchy.

The study was conducted in three distinct phases. First, a survey questionnaire was distributed to 536 male and female middle-level managers across diverse organizations in Bangkok. Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 67 women managers. It was likely that those in public sector organizations differed in their background and work experiences from their counterparts in private firms, hence data was collected from women managers in the two sectors and comparisons made. Lastly, structured interviews were held with 25 Human Resource/Line managers from a cross-section of firms in which the women managers worked.

The study found that the women who have succeeded in these organizations are the ones who have very similar backgrounds and attitudes to the men. They work the same long hours, and have the same interest in furthering their careers as men. Therefore we cannot explain women's career barriers in terms of individual characteristics, such as their motivation or commitment to work. The results suggest that organizational structures and processes are central to an understanding of the ways Thai women are marginalized and excluded from managerial positions. For instance, women were clustered in relatively few occupations, received less in terms of earnings and training, had smaller spans of management, and less authority for final decisions than men. During interviews, women managers mentioned that the negative attitudes of male managers and gender biases in organizational practices, were barriers they had frequently encountered. The data also revealed that the contradictory and ambiguous values that underlie women's role as wife-mother at home and manager at work, necessitated a constant struggle for balance and remarkable personal sacrifices on the part of Thai women managers.

By way of conclusion this dissertation submits that there is not a single cause that constrains women's advancement but rather a pattern of cultural, social and legal factors that characterizes the general situation of women managers in Thailand. Theoretical and practical implications of these findings for women in management are discussed and future directions for research in this area are suggested.



## **CHAPTER I.**

### **INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

A report by the Hansard Society (1990) in Britain states that there has been a quiet revolution in women's participation in the workplace. This quiet revolution is in evidence not just in Britain but in many countries of the world where women comprise between one-third to over half the labour force (ILO, 1992). In almost every occupation, in every sector, one can point to an increase in the numbers of women employed. The issue of women reaching managerial positions must be considered against this background where participation in paid work is nearly as common among women as among men. The same report concludes however, that many women are blocked in their attempts to gain access to higher positions. Women are said to encounter a 'glass ceiling' which constrains their aspirations, allowing them to see where they might go but preventing them from getting there.

#### **The case of Thailand**

Thailand is a country of approximately 59 million people situated in Southeast Asia. With no history of colonization, the Thais maintain their unique culture, values, beliefs and language. Thai women have always been, and continue to be, active participants in the workforce, the proportion of women in employment stands at 48.4 per cent (Labour Force Survey, 1992).



Thailand poses an interesting case for researchers looking at women in management as a subject of study. Western understanding would lead us to expect that as a Southeast Asian nation with strong cultural values about 'women's place', deference to men and strong family commitments, Thai women would be consigned to employment roles devoid of social prestige in a gender-based division of labour and probably have less success in gaining access to managerial and administrative positions than women in the West. The statistics however, suggest this is not the case. With 24 per cent of all managerial and administrative positions held by women, Thailand has a higher proportion of women in management than many EC countries, where a mere 11-17 per cent of managers are women (Asplund, 1988). It also has the second highest number of women in management, after the Philippines, in Asia. Moreover, ILO (1992) research suggests that in the next five years, the number of Thai women in middle management positions will surpass Thai males.

Despite these positive findings, there is no denying that Thai women's overall position in the workplace is still subordinate to men's. Women were, and continue to be, 'the hind legs of the elephant' as the Thai saying goes. This subordination is evident in several forms; the over-representation of women in low-paid, low-status jobs, (women are concentrated in the unpaid family worker category where they outnumber men by almost 50 per cent), the earnings-related inequalities between men and women (despite the existence of equal pay policies for almost a decade, women earn roughly 70 per cent of their male counterparts' earnings), and the concentration of women in mainly lower and middle positions in management.

Despite the ever growing numbers of women entering management jobs, research on Thai women managers has largely been neglected as an area of serious academic study. Unlike western countries where there is extensive research on women in management, investigations into the socio-demographic background of Thai women managers, their careers and work experiences, and even their attempts to balance their work and family responsibilities, have not been undertaken. Scattered articles in newspapers and magazines have contributed to our understanding of Thai women managers and their lives, but no clear or consistent picture has emerged as yet. As is common elsewhere, the majority of studies on workplace organization and behaviour in Thailand, have drawn only or mainly on men, both as subjects and informants.

### **The Research Objectives**

**The objective of this study is therefore to examine issues related specifically to women managers in Thailand. It explains the links between their backgrounds, career aspirations and lifestyles, and their professional development and advancement. In looking at the experience of women managers, one of the objectives is to identify the barriers to the appointment of women to higher level positions. More broadly, the study explores the ways in which organizational structures, processes and employment policies affect the careers and personal lives of women managers.**

This thesis is a detailed study of Thai women as managers, which covers every aspect ranging from their socio-economic backgrounds to an analysis of their current lives, at



work and at home. The broad nature of the investigation and the lack of existing research has required coverage of a number of diverse fields. While each of these could have been pursued in greater depth, they are each seen as necessary to clarify the position of women managers in Thailand.

### **The Need for the Study**

The study of Thai women managers, their backgrounds, careers and lifestyles was undertaken for two reasons. The first was curiosity. As a woman manager myself, married with two children, and constantly faced with the conflicting pulls of family and career, I felt a strong need to write about women like myself - women who, whatever their age and apparent circumstances, are struggling with the need to manage both their day-to day work and home relationships. It was for this reason that I chose not to focus on a select group of exceptional or 'hi-flyer' women managers. Rather the focus is on women as middle managers, an approach which gives the study broader relevance and one with which a larger number of Thai women can identify. I must add here that my position as a researcher in this study is unique, in the sense I am both an insider (a woman as well as a manager in a Thai organization; hence sufficiently familiar with the topic of the research) and an outsider (of non-Thai origin, having acquired Thai nationality through marriage; hence sufficiently detached to pursue the topic objectively). Second, given the growing numbers of women in management, it was felt to be important to move beyond general research on women workers (as is generally done in the Thai literature) to develop research specifically on women as managers. It is hoped that this will raise the level of awareness and understanding on

the part of the public policy-makers and male managers of women's experiences, the nature of their work, the special problems they experience, and the 'juggling' necessary to maintain the crucial balance between work and home. The latter is especially important. While collecting data for this study, male managers would frequently comment 'why are you interviewing only women, they are treated no different than us; we have no discrimination in our company' or 'women have no problems at work, all their problems begin at home'. What was evident was that for some Thai males, the fact that someone wanted to write about the professional and personal lives of women managers appeared not only surprising but a topic of little interest! It was precisely attitudes such as these which served to reinforce my decision to focus on women's experiences as managers as the main theme of the study.

Throughout the study, Western literature<sup>1</sup> on women and management is employed as a theoretical basis for understanding Thai women manager's lives. This is done not only because of the absence of a developed Thai, or even Asian, literature in the field, but also because the study assumes that Thai women managers are sufficiently similar to their western counterparts for this to be a useful approach. The study explores the similarities and differences between Thai women managers and those in the West at a number of levels through comparison of demographic data, work achievements, barriers encountered, domestic work patterns etc. It is argued that the unique characteristics of Thai history and culture can provide explanations of those differences

---

<sup>1</sup> The large majority of studies on women in management are North American. However, there also exists a substantial body of literature on the subject in countries such as Canada, UK, and Australia. The term 'Western literature' in this study therefore refers to studies made in these four countries.



which do exist between the position of Thai women managers and their counterparts in other Asian countries and the West.

Adler (1994) in her survey of women managers in 21 countries distributed over four continents, found that there were common barriers retarding women's progress in the majority of these countries. These included stereotypical perceptions, broadly-based discrimination against women, and exclusion from social networks. However it is undoubtedly the case that beyond the international commonalities, the uniqueness of local conditions and cultural themes has produced a variety of women's experiences world-wide. The three major themes and related questions which the study attempts to answer are discussed in the following paragraphs. `

### **The three major themes of the study**

First, it is expected that, notwithstanding the commonalities with women in western countries, some of the problems faced by Thai women managers in their work and personal lives will derive from the cultural themes and values that underpin the role of Thai women in society. In Thailand, as in many other Asian countries, the secondary status of women is deeply rooted in a sex-role ideology which defines a set of expectations about men and women and their appropriate occupational and social relations. This sex-role ideology, based on religion as well as Thai cultural values, mandates that a woman's primary allegiance ought to be to the family and that men ought to be the major providers of economic as well as social status. Why then are so many Thai women in the workforce? The basic questions I am asking here are, who are

these women managers?, how do they differ from their male counterparts in terms of their socio-demographic background?, to what extent does culture influence the representation and placement of women in managerial posts in Thailand? Western literature shows that women who occupy managerial positions are largely concentrated in 'caring' functions such as personnel, training, education and administration. Whereas studies on the occupational areas in which women managers are located in Thailand show that they are concentrated in finance, accounting and marketing. What accounts for this difference in occupational specialization between Thai and western women managers? Could it be that while some values constrain women in the workplace, there are positive stereotypes i.e., women's honesty, patience and diligence, that help employers rationalize Thai women's presence in what previously were male domains?

Secondly, the assumption that even when a woman is in paid employment, she will retain responsibility for housework and childcare is a problem faced by women worldwide. However different cultural systems and family structure can lead this to be experienced differently. Does the existence of extended families and widely available domestic support reduce the impact of this factor for Thai women managers? Or is it the case that even with the availability of such assistance, Thai women still have a heavy responsibility for organizing and maintaining bought-in services, and for the care and socialization of their children which affects their work opportunities? Does the need to conform with the role of ideal mother/wife, as well as successful manager, mean that Thai women are paying a high price in other ways? What impacts do these conflicting pulls have on their lifestyles? How do they manage to balance the demands



of family and work? Could it be that modern Thai women are forsaking marriage and children to pursue their careers akin to their western counterparts?

Thirdly, one argument for the absence of women in higher occupational positions in the West is that women are not given adequate promotions because they take breaks in their careers while their children are young, or they work part-time. In contrast, Thai women are said to have a 'high plateau' pattern in their workforce participation, which means that they continue their working lives with little interruption for childrearing. Does this form part of the explanation of their success?

Western literature has suggested that the barriers that women in management encounter are due to individual differences between men and women, organizational contexts and institutionalized discrimination (Adler, 1994, Fagenson, 1991). Do these form barriers for Thai women managers as well and, if they do, do Thai women experience them to the same degree as women managers in the West? Companies' personnel policies for women constitute an integral part of the employment and labour market systems. The Western literature suggests that equality policies, consisting of a range of formalized personnel procedures with additional initiatives to support women, can increase the proportion of women in management positions. The Thai economy has large proportions of foreign-owned firms, Thai owned-firms, and a significant public sector. What sort of recruitment policies do these organizations use for hiring managers? Do multinational firms (MNCs) use the same policies as indigenous firms? If these differ, do MNCs have approaches more in line with Western equality approaches and are women more successful within them as a result? Similarly, can the



different personnel policies in private firms and the public sector account for women's differential success in these sectors? It must be mentioned here that Thailand has few equal opportunity laws. Does this imply a large degree of institutionalized discrimination against Thai women?

The questions posed in the paragraphs above are the principal ones which the study aims to address. Because the study of women in management does not fit neatly into any established academic discipline, the research effort has had to cross traditional discipline boundaries such as management and organizational behaviour, labour market studies, sociology, psychology, human resource management, feminism and gender studies, in order to build a theoretical core. For the purpose of understanding a complex and evolving situation, the data for the study was obtained by using various research instruments. At the outset it was essential to compare the socio-demographic profiles of Thai male and female managers. Only after establishing the major differences in background, career aspirations and family responsibilities, could more serious issues such as workplace discrimination be examined. Because no such data source exists in Thailand, a representative sample of middle managers was chosen and a mail questionnaire administered. Following analysis of this questionnaire it was possible for the distinctive features of women managers to be pursued in greater depth. The objective of the study was also to understand more about Thai women in relation to their management jobs. As such, it was imperative that the women should have a chance to recount their experiences, to 'tell the story of their lives'. The need for detailed and sometimes, sensitive information from women managers necessitated the use of unstructured, in-depth interviews.

One of the themes identified above was the significance of personnel policies for women managers' progress in different types of organizations. Again, no systematic data has been collected on this topic in Thailand and it was necessary to research this directly through interviews with HR and Line Managers. It was felt that structured interviews would be the most appropriate technique in this case. The data collection for the study was therefore conducted in three phases. In addition, secondary data sources, such as management journals, government publications and newspapers, both in Thai and English were also reviewed to obtain information on women's issues, labour statistics, Thai labour law, etc.

### **The significance of the study**

How significant is the study from the Thai viewpoint? In my opinion it is not only timely, but extremely significant for several reasons. As mentioned earlier, very little data on Thai women managers exists. The study will provide a valuable data base, and it is hoped that the findings will lead to a greater understanding of what measures could allow Thai women to achieve their potential. The study also develops an analysis of the ways in which culture, gender and organization policies and processes together account for the under-representation of women in management. This allows the development of an account of women managers in Thailand which builds on and modifies Western accounts. At least some of the findings can also be generalized to other Asian countries, which have similar culture and paternalistic management practices. Furthermore, the focus on different organizational practices and women



managers' experiences in these organizations, can help identify policies which might be beneficial to women if diffused more widely. Finally, the Thai experience might be thought to raise interesting questions for those studying women managers in the West since it challenges a number of assumptions about the causes of their under-representation.

### **The structure of the study:**

The study is made up of eight chapters and a brief summary of each follows.

Chapter II provides the background information on Thailand, and discusses the historical, socio-cultural and economic issues which are critical to understanding business systems in Thailand. The chapter covers the unique values adopted by the Thais, the forms of business organizations, and the HR strategies favoured by firms in Thailand in relation to employment. It provides a basis for understanding the distinctive context within which this study is located. This broad understanding of cultural values and business practices underpins the more detailed consideration of Thai women managers in later chapters.

Chapter III presents an overview of Thai women and their status. Its objective is to give a cross-sectional view of women workers in the employment systems. The chapter examines Thai legislation and its impact on the status of women. It also provides data on white-collar women employees in the public and private sectors. By using literature from a number of Asian countries, it is possible to obtain a clearer picture of Thai



women's status relative to their counterparts in neighbouring countries. This chapter builds on the picture established in the previous chapter by providing a focus on women workers. It also provides a basis for assessing the relevance of the Western research that will be introduced in the next chapter.

Chapter IV presents a review of the literature and key findings concerning issues considered to be most relevant to the study. As mentioned earlier, the major reason for using the Western literature on women and management is because of the lack of a developed Thai or even Asian literature in this area. Key issues covered here are women in the workplace, specifically those in managerial positions; women's work versus family responsibilities, and the major theoretical perspectives outlining the barriers women in management encounter. These barriers are analyzed from three perspectives: gender-centred, organizational structure, and organizational processes. This framework provides the basis for the empirical investigation which follows.

Chapter V involves an explanation of the research methodology utilized in the 3-phases of the study. The chapter presents the rationale for using each method, a description of the research instruments, sample selection, as well as explanations behind the questions asked in each phase of the data collection. The intention was both to gather data on women managers' situations and to pursue the three themes identified earlier. These are the extent to which the distinctively Thai values identified in Chapters II and III explain the position of women managers in Thailand; the ways in which the particular family structure and domestic division of labour impact on their working lives; and ways in which organizations affect women's achievements.

Chapter VI presents the findings obtained from 372 respondents of the mail questionnaire survey. Issues such as male and female managers' demographic profiles, their occupational sectors, career aspirations, interruptions, advancement, and job involvement are compared. The impact of family on both men and women's careers is discussed with respect to housework, childcare, leisure hours etc. In comparing men with women the chapter identifies what is distinctive about women's experience in management and provides a basis for distinguishing between those barriers based on gender and those experienced by all Thai managers.

Chapter VII reports the findings of face-to-face interviews conducted with 67 women managers and is organized around key themes which emerged from analysis of the questionnaire. It covers issues related to women's employment histories, personal experiences, interaction with men in the workplace and the interface between family and their organization lives. It allows for a more in-depth understanding of their value systems and home and workplace experiences. This highlights the extent to which the framework established in Chapter IV needs to be modified in the Thai context.

Chapter VIII presents the findings of interviews held with HR/Line managers. It presents an overall analysis and evaluation of employment policies regarding hiring/promotion of Thai women as managers, in the absence of equal opportunity laws. The differences in practices between sectors as well as locally-owned and multinational firms in the private sector are discussed. A comparison of the responses of managers in the various firms, is also reported to obtain a clearer picture of the

obstacles and constraints that limit opportunities for women in these firms. This provides a particular insight into the organizational processes perspective identified in Chapter IV and allows an exploration of the experiences reported by the women in Chapter VII from a managerial perspective.

Chapter IX summarizes the findings and attempts some conclusions in the light of the research questions posed in the study. It summarizes the findings about the main ways in which Thai women managers are similar and different from their male peers and from Western women in similar occupational positions. The chapter provides an integrated account of Thai women's position at work and at home which draws on both the Thai cultural context and the wider Western literature.



## **CHAPTER II**

### **THAILAND : HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Many of the current characteristics of management and human resources development in Thailand have their roots in its economic, socio-political and cultural history. Thailand is situated in the Indo-Chinese peninsula and is roughly the size of France. It is bordered by Malaysia to the south, Burma to the west, Cambodia to the east and Laos to the north. Although Thailand shares many characteristics with her other Southeast Asian neighbours, she maintains a uniqueness that sets her apart from countries with a history of colonization, such as Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines. In the absence of its colonization by outside powers, Thailand was able to select what it wanted from the outside world and such constant but carefully chosen borrowings, and their assimilation into the social fabric, have been one of the major and continuing characteristics of the Thai development process. Girling (1981:19), a scholar on Thai society and politics has commented, 'Far more than in most societies, the past in Thailand is reenacted in the present. To understand the nature of modern Thai society and politics, therefore, a knowledge of Thai history is indispensable'. The objective of this chapter is to identify the key cultural values in Thailand and their origin and to explore how these factors have influenced the development process as well as impacted on contemporary Thai managerial practices.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Although the history of Thailand before the fourteenth century is relatively obscure and the subject of much scholarly debate, there is general agreement based on linguistic evidence that Tai-speaking peoples from China migrated down into Southeast Asia (Skinner, 1957). Only in the mid-fourteenth century does the history of the Tai principalities begin to emerge with some clarity. By common usage, the Tai who occupied the alluvial central plains of the Chao Phraya River were already known as Siamese. As the kingdoms on the central plains extended their suzerainty over wider areas occupied by principalities already speaking various forms of Tai, and over areas inhabited by people linguistically unrelated (such as Khmer), or even more distant both linguistically and culturally (such as Moslem Malays), the state of Siam gradually emerged. The modern-day term 'Thai' thus connotes a people and identity that developed over a long period of assimilation among the Tai, the earlier cultures, and the more recent immigrants from China and elsewhere.

The dominant principality that developed into the first extensive Siamese kingdom, was centered on the city of Ayudya. In 1767, when Ayudya fell to Burmese invasion, a new capital was established at Thonburi, near the mouth of the Chao Phraya River, then moved in 1782 to Bangkok, on the opposite bank. The monarch who established Bangkok as the capital, Rama I (1782-1809) was the first of the Chakri Dynasty, the royal line that has continued as head of state up to the present king, Rama IX.

Modern Thai history can be dated precisely from 1855, the year King Mongkut concluded a treaty with Great Britain that established the basis for commercial relations between the two countries. Named after the British negotiator, the Bowring Treaty opened Siam to foreign trade after a period of virtual closure to Western contact and set the pattern for similar treaties with other Western nations. As trade grew following the Bowring Treaty, many opportunities for capital accumulation developed, and foreign business houses were soon established in Bangkok.

King Mongkut had a reputation as a man of powerful intellect, learned in foreign languages and western sciences, a Buddhist reformer, and an admirer of western civilization. During his 17-year reign and his son Chulalongkorn's lengthy 42-year rule, from the mid-eighteenth century until shortly before the First World War, Siamese statecraft faced three principal issues: maintenance of independence, internal political consolidation, and development of economic and administrative strength. Under the Bowring and subsequent treaties, the monarchs granted extraterritorial rights over the legal treatment of the respective foreign nationals. The treaties also fixed the rules for foreign trade and inland commerce, in effect, establishing a free-trade regime under which infant-industry protectionism was precluded. This policy of close association and accommodation with Great Britain thus not only maintained Siam's independence in an era when large parts of Asia and Africa were falling under colonial rule, but by the time of King Chulalongkorn's death in 1910, all three of the objectives set up can be said to have been met.



It was towards the end of King Chulalongkorn's reign that a broad process of modernization was launched. The study of Western science had been introduced. Slavery and corvee labour were eliminated. Large-scale immigration of Chinese labour had been undertaken to provide the manpower for the construction of railways, irrigation and other projects. A central administration had been created based on a powerful bureaucracy. The basis of the system modeled along British lines, modified the traditional functions of the court into a hierarchical system of government agencies, with administrative powers assumed principally by the central government. Under the stimulus of foreign trade, the country's export capacity had grown steadily based on the vast expansion of rice production, on the extraction of tin from the southern peninsula, and teak from the northern provinces.

The ascent to the throne of King Rama VII in 1925 came at a critical juncture in Thai history. Increased political awareness among military and civilian officers, most of whom were educated abroad, led to a high degree of discontent with the royal government's economic policies and a coup d'état in 1932 resulted in the end of absolute monarchy. A formal constitution was subsequently promulgated and a National Assembly set up. The country changed its name from Siam to 'Prathet Thai' or Thailand which literally translated means Land of the Free, on 11 May, 1949.

## **Population and Demography**

The Thai population is considered to be the most uniform in Southeast Asia, 95 per cent are Thai-speaking Buddhists. In terms of ethnic composition, the majority group is Thai, while Chinese constitute the largest minority group. Smaller minorities include Indians and Pakistanis who are mostly engaged in trade, and Vietnamese living in the northeast. In mid-1990, Thailand's population was 55.8 million and, in the decade prior to that, had been growing at an average annual rate of 1.8 per cent, down from 2.7 per cent over the decade before (Warr, 1993) . In the year 2000, it is projected that one-third of the population will still be under 15 years of age, but Thailand can be assured of a sizable labour force because of the small proportion of people in their retirement years (4.5 per cent compared to 9.6 per cent in more developed countries). For countries in Thailand's GDP group, its degree of urbanization is unusually low (23 per cent of the total) and the importance of agriculture in total employment is high. Even more unusual is the degree to which the urban population is concentrated in a single city, Bangkok.

The bulk of the urban population and three-quarters of Thailand's university graduates reside in Bangkok, the capital city, which has a population of roughly 6 million people. Bangkok's centrality and importance had been explained by Wilson (1970) in the following terms:

The capital Bangkok, was the home of the royal family and the leading officials of the kingdom. Here were concentrated the kingdom's wealth, its palaces, temples, monuments, and works of art. Here were found its main workshops, foundries and shipyards. Bangkok was not only an

intellectual center; it was also the administrative and economic center....especially of the royal base which supplied it with the necessary rice, material goods and manpower (pp. 51-52)

Blanchard (1958) writing on social stratification and ranking observed that Bangkok society could be divided into five major subgroups : the aristocracy, consisting of members of the royal family and the old nobility; the elite, consisting of manufacturers, high-ranking government officials and professionals; the upper-middle class, consisting of clerks, teachers, small businesspersons and low-level government officials; the lower-middle class, consisting of skilled labourers, lowest level government employees; and the lower class, consisting of farmers and fishermen.

### **Chinese immigrant manpower: The ethnic division of labour**

As stated earlier, Rama IV and Rama V, assisted by British financial advisers, carried out policies of modernization such as the legal and administration reform, re-entering trade with the West, education of the elite in British schools, investments, and other forms of expansion. But it is no exaggeration to say that mobilization of and control over manpower was the central internal problem facing Thai statecraft for at least four centuries.

To meet the shortage of labour outside agriculture, the government encouraged Chinese immigration. The number of Chinese at the time of the Bowring Treaty has been estimated around 5-6 per cent of the total Siamese population, a figure which grew to 15 per cent by 1950 (Skinner, 1957). Between their dominant position in tin mining and their predominance in other nonagricultural sectors, the Chinese made a



substantial contribution to Thailand's economic development over the whole historical period.

The question of ethnicity in economic functions and in the distribution of income and economic power has played a fundamental role in the economic policies of Thailand. The ethnic division of economic functions arose from the rural Thai occupational preference for agriculture combined with the Thai government's policy that excluded Chinese from slavery or from the *corvee* (forced labour). In the 1950s when substantial capital for industrial development was proposed for Thailand, the Chinese offered their services to the government to make the policy operational. Later, when the Thai government looked to the private sector to contribute to national development, the Sino-Thai who were located in private firms, banks, import-export businesses, real estate and others, complied willingly with the government's request.

One strategy used by the Chinese merchants in Thailand to consolidate their position was to establish holding companies with branch offices in provinces in the Central Region to handle the exports of rice and other agricultural crops. By maintaining connections and working closely with local merchants, some of these merchants shifted their focus to banking and other non-agricultural investments. By the early 1960s, the predominantly Sino-Thai commercial elite had diversified from a base in rice milling and exporting, to finance, automobiles, steel, light consumer electronics, fertilizer and chemicals in addition to the export-orientated light manufacturing such as textiles and food processing. With very few exceptions, all these industries were created and run by Bangkok-based, Sino-Thai families.

As mentioned earlier, the Bowring Treaty paved the way for new opportunities in the form of capital development resulting in the entry of foreign firms. But these firms which were established in Bangkok soon found that in order to operate smoothly they required links to the local community. Compradors became the link between these firms and the local economy. These compradors were mostly Chinese merchants and employed assistants who could speak English, Thai, and Chinese dialects. This was important in such ventures as rice trading because compradors in Western firms had to purchase rice from Chinese middlemen and deal with government agencies. Hence while Westerners made handsome profits from trade and commerce, so did Chinese merchants. In the early twentieth century, compradors were among the most prominent Chinese in Bangkok. Over the years, Chinese traders came to be more accepted in Thailand than in other parts of Southeast Asia. While relations between the Chinese and indigenous communities have been problematic in Malaysia and Indonesia owing to the lack of compatibility between Chinese and Muslim cultures, Thailand and the Philippines are the two Southeast Asian countries in which the position of the Chinese is well consolidated (McVey, 1992).

The Thai economy is now dominated not only by large firms but also those that have been combined into a smaller number of conglomerate groups which emerged after the 1960s. A field survey by Suehiro conducted between 1981 and 1984 showed that of the 100 largest firms in terms of total assets among financial institutions, 70 belonged to Thai-Chinese. Almost all the owners and controllers of Thailand's largest firms are descendants of overseas Chinese. It is mainly because the dominant domestic capitalist



groups of Thailand today, i.e., younger male and female business managers, although locally-born, holding Thai nationality and using the Thai language, are ethnic Chinese, that a study of the Chinese contribution to the economic development of Thailand, is pertinent to this study.

### **Women's position in Thai history and culture**

The history of Thai women is documented back to the Sukhothai period (seven centuries ago). During that period, Thai women enjoyed a free and easy social interaction with high involvement in agriculture and trade. Traditionally, Thai women, especially those in the peasantry have always played a significant role in family and community life because peasant social activities and kinship systems revolved around women. For instance, women were the ones to play key roles in births, marriages and deaths, most deities being women. Women were also the key to neighbourhood and community cooperatives in the provision of labour and food. Widows and divorced women were automatically considered heads of families, therefore they could directly participate in community decision making to the same degree as men (Chandhamrong, 1986). The 'bilateral' system, which meant that among the peasantry land could be inherited by both boys and girls gave women equal rights to men and most village customs tolerated and even encouraged women's public mobility after marriage (Dickinson, 1963).

A century later, the status of Thai women declined considerably during the Ayudhya period. For example, a law was enacted which prohibited Thai women from marrying



foreigners. The law of 'Husbands and Wives' enacted in 1361, allowed men to practice polygamy openly, and divided wives into different categories. Husbands were also given power to inflict corporal punishment on their wives (Suwannathat, 1989). Nonetheless, peasant women were still allowed a greater degree of freedom of movement than women in India and China, where mobility was restricted by social customs such as *purdah* and footbinding.

Buddhism, while helping to promote egalitarianism in 'class' terms also undermined the esteem in which Thai women were held . It accorded spiritual capacity (*phon*) overwhelmingly to men and allowed only men to become monks (*bhikkus*); women could become the inferior non-ordained nuns (*mae chi*) or acquire merit through their sons' entering the monkhood. Since education was solely administered by monasteries in the past, and Thai women did not have the privilege of being ordained as monks, women were deprived of any education, although some were taught to read and write by more open-minded relatives. Buddhism encouraged women to be more economically active in order to serve the Buddhist order and to gain merit, and this helped legitimize a gender division of labour in which women played the major economic roles while men monopolized religious and political structures. It is important to understand the paradox in which Thai women found themselves. For whilst the bilateral system allowed women the freedom and authority to control the family finances and make decisions, the male-dominated feudal system and Buddhism imposed an economic burden on Thai women who had to work much harder and yet remain subordinate to men. Their widespread illiteracy did not help the situation.

During the Ratanakosin period starting in the 17th century, there were significant changes in attitudes and behaviour towards women in Thai society. At the peak of western colonization in Asia, Thai monarchs adopted some western ideas and practices. For example, education was considered to be the prime factor in the development of the country, and hence widely promoted. Secondary and vocational schools were opened in Bangkok, first for boys only, and later for girls. Primary education was declared compulsory for all children, regardless of gender in 1921. During the reign of Rama IV, the practice of husbands selling their wives against their will was abolished. Women were also allowed to choose their marriage partners. In the reign of Rama V, the status of Thai women was further elevated with the abolition of slavery. Feudal laws, which allowed the buying and selling of women, were replaced by reformed family codes in the 1920s and the Monopoly Law of 1935, which outlawed polygamy and ended the rights of men to physically punish their wives.

After the Second World War, the changes in the role and status of Thai women became more marked. Women's participation in agriculture was not only regarded as economically important but also a means whereby they gained parity with men. Women began to be more involved in industry and business and also do jobs that were traditionally reserved for men. Thai women were the first in Asia to be given the right to vote in 1932 when the country changed its form of government to a constitutional monarchy.

The modernization of Thai society and the introduction of western education during the 1950s, had an unequal impact on Thai women. For the privileged few, equal



access to education and employment enabled them to take advantage of the expanding job opportunities in the modern sector. These women enjoyed the freedom to choose from a variety of modern roles and careers, such as teaching, medicine and law. Jobs and educational opportunities in the rural areas continued to be limited, and although participation was high, women were in low-paid, unskilled jobs and remained neglected in terms of health and education (Paitoonpong, 1982). This occupational stratification of women in urban and rural areas has therefore created groups with varying levels of advantage. All women face problems of social and economic discrimination relative to men but the extent of this varies within each of these groups. Researchers, therefore face a dilemma when they study the role and status of Thai women. While on one hand, there is a growing number of well-educated, urban women who formally enjoy equal status with men, on the other hand, there is still a majority of lesser-educated, unskilled women who have little access to education, the job market or the political arena.

Nonetheless, some researchers have noted that Thai women, overall, are seen as having a stronger position in society than their counterparts in other cultures (Suwannathat, 1989; Knodel et al, 1987). In contrast to South Asia where patriarchy and caste inequalities pervade both village and family systems and where religions such as Hinduism and Islamism help create a marked normative divide between men's and women's familial responsibilities, gender role expectations are less-rigidly demarcated in Thailand. For example, most petty trade in the form of buying and selling in the market place was, and is still carried out by women. Thai wives and mothers often have higher rates of labour force participation than their Asian counterparts, and this is



often construed as leading to higher levels of domestic decision-making (Suwannathat, 1989). Another factor identified as critical in enhancing women's status in the Thai household is their strong role in household financial management. One can consider two possible explanations for Thai women's more powerful role in household money management than their contemporaries in other Southeast Asian nations. First, the prevalence of matrilocal residence was responsible for many women controlling the household economy. Second, the social structure of the *Sakdi Na* (corvee labour) system required all able men to perform corvee labour for the King. Since this took most men away from home for long periods, the responsibility for tending to household activities, both economic and otherwise, was left to women. Indeed a strong thread running through much writing on gender and family-based household in Thailand is that of democratic consultation between the spouses on matters of expenditure and labour allocation and the relatively equal treatment of male and female children (Suwannathat, 1989; Knodel et al, 1987).

One can then pose the question: if women had a central role in economic production, why were they confined to play a subservient role to men? If we examine traditional Thai literature it becomes clear that male supremacy, dominance and chauvinism were strongest among the political and social elite. Money and wealth were made through political power and status vested in men who were ennobled and who made their livelihood through their positions. Men at the apex of the social strata did not have to follow the *Sakdi Na* system and women in this stratum of society were not subject to the conditions described earlier for common women. Their dependency on men deepened the requirements for them to please and serve their male counterparts. As the

social and political elite strengthened its hold on society, the values and norms that the elite saw as appropriate for itself, were disseminated to the rest of society. Greater equality and sharing between women and men were gradually eroded by the elite culture. Vichit-vadakan (1993) has argued that long years of cultural imposition from the elite have supplanted the more egalitarian male-female relations with the male-dominance model.

## **SOCIO/CULTURAL FRAMEWORK**

In this section, some of the features of the Thai social organization which have an impact on its development process and makes it unique to other societies in Asia, will be examined. Since religion is a major aspect of Thai social organization, its significance and impact on other compartments of Thai life will be explored first in this section.

### **Religion:**

Out of the estimated 59 million people in Thailand about 95 per cent are Buddhists, while about 4 per cent are Muslims, 0.5 per cent Christians and the remainder are Hindus, Sikhs, Confucians and others (Thailand in the 90s, 1991). Throughout the country, there is a network of monasteries and monks, and a variety of institutions, including educational institutions run by Buddhist monks. For instance, there are 10,400 Buddhist ecclesiastical schools and two higher institutes of learning, the

Mahamukut Buddhist University and the Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University, which opened in 1946 and 1947 respectively.

As mentioned earlier, the Thais are a people who have developed their identity over a long period of assimilation among the Khmer, Malay, Chinese and others. The Thai for instance, borrowed from the Khmers many features of their administrative and political institutions, art forms, system of writing, and vocabulary. Most importantly, they borrowed the major features of the Khmer royal cult and imported Cambodian Brahman priests to conduct its rites. This is then how Thailand from the Ayutthayan times onward has come to have Theravada Buddhism as the religion of the king and people and also a traditional royal cult, at which Brahmans have always officiated, a cult that apart from its ideological basis in Buddhism, is compounded of notions derived from Sinhalese Buddhism.

Historically, Theravada Buddhism, in particular, has always 'validated and complemented' the institution of kingship. Buddhism, as practiced in Thailand has been positively related to the conception of an ideal politico-social order, whose corner-stone was a religious monarch who would promote a prosperous society and religion. Tambiah (1970:62) observes that 'Buddhism and kingship had a close complementary relationship in Ceylon, Burma and Thailand, all countries of Theravada Buddhism'.

The influence of Theravada Buddhism, has permeated so deeply into the social fabric of the country that scholars studying the function of Buddhism in Thailand propose



that Thai society and Thai social order should be seen as having a religious base. From birth to death, an individual is involved with various Buddhist rites and ceremonies as he/she passes through successive stages of the life cycle. If a person is male, he is expected to spend a period of time ranging from a few days to several years, or even a lifetime, in the monkhood.

The extent to which religious values and beliefs are incorporated into concrete everyday behaviour and situations can be observed throughout the kingdom. For instance, the Buddhist conception of a moral polity readily fits with the notion that only a materially-prosperous society can be ready for the pursuit of spiritual concerns. Seen in this context therefore, it can be said that the more the Thais enjoy the material goods and luxuries that are associated with affluence, the more meaningful it is for them as Buddhists to engage in gift-giving to monks and to temples, and thereby accumulate merit. The concept of merit-making is linked to the theory of rebirth, for rebirth can and does promise a more optimistic future, or better conditions, to those who act charitably and give generously in this life.

Hanks (1962,1975) argued that the essence of Thai world view is a cosmic hierarchy whose levels are defined in terms of ‘merit’ (*bun*) and ‘demerit’ (*bap*). The level of ‘high-ness’ or ‘low-ness’ of an individual’s status is believed to vary according to his store of merit and demerit, the more merit (*bun*), the higher one’s status and vice versa. It thus follows, argues Hanks (1962:1248)) that ‘because of his greater merit, a rich man is more effective than a poor man and freer from suffering’. The thrust of these observations is to highlight the basic Thai perception and conception of persons

and units as being in flow, rising and falling, which correlates with the principles and processes of group affiliation and termination, of social movement and mobility, of the trajectories of individuals' careers and change of titles and name identities.

Based on the concepts of (*bun*) and (*bap*), Kirsch (1975) observed that Thai society may be seen as a single, internally-differentiated hierarchy with the poor peasants at the bottom and extending upwards through wealthy persons and businesspeople, government officials, politicians, nobility and the king, topped by the status group of monks. Thus for Thais, on the one hand, there is clear recognition of a system of ranked positions and that *prima facie* the occupants of superior positions are deserving of them (i.e., have legitimacy) by virtue of their merit. Hence inferiors owe them respect, obedience and service. But on the other hand, incumbents of office are individuals, and their actions determine their rise and fall. Thus, the same respect, obedience and service can be by definition, equally withheld or withdrawn when the superior's performance results in his/her demotion or replacement, that is, in his/her loss of merit.

Whereas writers such as Hanks (1962,1975) and Tambiah (1970, 1976) saw Thai world view as strongly influenced by Buddhism, not every Thais' world view is shaped by the teachings of Theravada Buddhism and the organization which is devoted to it. Some writers such as Skinner (1957) and Evers (1966) have played down the role of religion and viewed social structure as a phenomenon influenced more by socio-economic and political factors. Their position is that these factors have affected and transformed the Thai world view from one having a traditional Buddhist base to a



secular, non-Buddhist view with a somewhat Western and Chinese flavour. Therefore, their argument is that whilst religion played a highly important role in the political and economic domains in the past, changing social structure and value systems coupled with rapid industrialization have reduced the role of religion to an almost exclusively spiritual sphere. A similar view is taken by Sulak Sivarak, an expert on Thai culture and religion who has observed that rapid industrialization together with Thailand's materialistically-orientated society has accounted for a significant decline in religious influence, especially among younger, urban Thais. (Sulak Sivarak, *Bangkok Post*, 16 March, 1989).

Nevertheless, one can argue that Sivarak's rejection of modernization in Thailand, (including the imitation of Western techniques) and his call for restrained consumerism are unrealistic in the face of rising incomes, changing tastes and the powerful impetus to social change imbedded in the Thai economy's performance over the years. As a result, the focus of much thought has been on how Buddhist doctrine and practice might be reinterpreted, or reformed to reestablish their pertinence to modern life for the increasingly educated and secular middle class. Part of this reinterpretation has aimed at a return to original Buddhist doctrine, cleansed of traditionally popular non-Buddhist (animistic and Brahmanistic) observances, seen as no longer intellectually tenable. Given the interlaced totality of religion and politics, of national consciousness and religious identity, of righteous morality and politics, it is difficult to see even younger generation, urban Thais dispensing with Buddhist referents in the near future. In fact, judging from the conspicuousness and frequency of religious and ritual activity both in Bangkok and other provinces, and the attendance of younger people at



religious festivals and merit-making ceremonies, Buddhism is a flourishing religious-social activity, vitally alive and of utmost significance in the lives of Thai, both young and old.

### **Thai People And Unique Thai Values**

The previous section described how certain features of Thai society, i.e., the role of the monarch, social stratification and the distribution of power, resulted from the Thais' ability to borrow from the cultures of neighbouring countries whilst maintaining close religious association with Sinhalese Buddhism. Tambiah (1976) argues that because of Thailand's uninterrupted enjoyment of political autonomy, its society became more amenable to adapting certain features of westernization than either Burma or Sri Lanka. While people in these two countries rejected Western culture and knowledge as part and parcel of their rejection of Western colonialism, Thailand, lacking this kind of direct colonial supremacy, was more open to the knowledge, organizational skills and expertise of European and American advisers. What resulted from all these borrowings was a crystallization, an amalgam of western and eastern cultural values which was distinctively Thai and hence unique among the developing countries of Southeast Asia. Because these values have a strong impact on the general as well as organizational behaviour of Thais, an explanation of these are valid in this context.

Embree (1950) classified Thailand as a 'loosely structured' social system by which he meant that in contrast to other Asian cultures, such as the Japanese, Chinese and Vietnamese, the Thai did not have a closely-knit social structure. In his paper, Embree

maintained that what struck him as an observer was 'the individualistic behaviour of the people' and 'the absence of regularity, discipline and regimentation in Thai life' (p.4) For the author what was responsible for the individualistic behaviour of the Thais was the loose family structure and also a weak framework of mutual obligations in rural communities. Embree's interpretation of individualism was upheld by Phillips (1965) who maintained that the Thais' sense of self-concern and freedom of choice seldom allows a sense of obligation, solidarity and ideological commitment to anything beyond personal values.

Some scholars have sought to explain the loose nature of Thai society by linking it to the Hindu-Buddhist framework. Tambiah (1976) for instance, argued that the doctrine of Buddhist polity to be realized via righteous kingship, did not specify with any firmness or finality of detail specific norms relating to the status and freedom of women, to marriage customs and rituals of family life, and that within the Buddhist fold itself there were, unlike Islamic societies, no castes, or religious sectarian associations separating themselves from nonmembers, outsiders, aliens or non-believers.

Piker (1975) in seeking to explain the individual dimension of Thai society as different from the individualism which is found in Western societies (i.e. an individual is afforded the maximum opportunity to make decisions affecting his/her own future), also used the Buddhist concept of individual responsibility for one's own salvation, i.e., one is punished or rewarded according to one's deeds, thoughts or cravings. He justified Thai individualism as the need to rely on oneself as a result of both the



indeterminate motives of others and the general unreliability of human behaviour. Likewise, as mentioned earlier, both '*bap*' (merit) and '*bun*' (demerit) signify an *individual's* moral and social state and in turn, are related to his/her prosperity in the next life. Hence, the example of Thais performing ineffectively in groups (Komin, 1990) can be attributed to the Buddhist concept of a human being's need to work individually for his/her own *karma* (salvation).

Besides individualism, the Buddhist tenets are used pervasively, even today to explain other Thai values and behaviour. Thus the emphasis on permissiveness, non-violence, tolerance, uninvolvedness and other characteristics which underlie Thai social behaviour and attitudes are seen as primarily derived from Buddhist concepts. For example, when Thai behaviour is seen as non-committal, indifferent, and emotionless by western observers (Embree, 1950), it is attributed to the Buddhist emphasis on detachment (Komin, 1990). In circumstances of loss or failure the ideal response of the Thai is '*mai pen rai*' (never mind), a sign that one is not shaken or moved by situations, a calm disposition being identified with a socially-valued personality.

Another dominant characteristic underlying Thai social organization is the patron-client relationship, or what some writers have labeled 'entourage' (Hanks, 1975; Potter, 1976). An entourage 'is a hierarchically organized group in which a number of subordinates support a leader who holds their allegiance by successfully advancing their interests' (Potter, 1976:193). Earlier, the Thai agricultural economy relied on the *corvee* system and slavery for its steady supply of labour in rural areas. A complicated system of status rankings formally demarcated the two basic classes in society; the



commoners (*phrai*) and the ruling class of aristocrats (*nai*). The rights of the aristocrats were enshrined in law; commoners had no access to legal processes except through their *nai* thereby confirming a powerful patron-client relationship between aristocrats and commoners.

The importance of the patron-client relationship can also be observed in Rigg's (1961) view of the relationship between politics and business, a relationship he characterized as 'pariah entrepreneurship'. Riggs suggests that in Thailand, it is governmental service rather than business that provides opportunities for status and wealth. Individual businessmen could be permitted by influential officials to carry on their activities, provided they contributed financially to the private income of their protectors and patrons in the government. Hence the emergence and survival of particular enterprises was only possible through the intervention of influential officials.

The patron-client relationship or what Hanks (1975) refers to as entourage impinges not only on a strong leadership, but what is known as '*bunkhun*' in Thai society. There is no English equivalent of *bunkhun* but it may be described as any good thing, help or favour done by someone which entails gratitude and obligation on the part of the beneficiary. Thus in difficult times, Thais instinctively seek solutions to their collective problems not in mutual cooperation and shared effort but in a masterful and decisive leader, an individual with personal capabilities, status and charisma. Such leaders are repaid in the form of services and loyalty (*bunkun*) by the followers. The arrangement is always reciprocal, almost symbiotic and this societal symbiosis generates the fundamental cohesive force that binds Thais together. This *bunkhun*

obligation is especially strong within the family and kinship circles wherein the younger generation is very much obligated by the *bunghun* rendered by the older generations.

Finally, there is a code of conduct based on Buddhist edicts, some of which are *metta* (loving kindness), *mudhita* (sympathetic joy), *karuna* (compassion), *dana* (charity) etc. The individual dimension is evident here in that action based on giving up or sacrifice, implies not so much the renunciation of action as making merit for one's *karma* (salvation). The belief that in order to maintain better interpersonal relationships one must possess a "*jai yen*" (cool heart) is widely accepted in Thai culture. To be a cool-hearted person, one must avoid expressing feelings and emotions directly, and instead face all situations with a smile of normality on one's face, handling them with prudence and care. With a cool heart, one can exercise tolerance in unhappy situations and enjoy a calmer life. A basic rule in Thai interaction is to avoid an open, face to face conflict; this behaviour is considered not only an intelligent social response but also a meritorious act. These interpretations are the most important among those offered to explain the socio-cultural values and personality of Thai people.

### **Research on Thai Values**

The first extensive study on Thai values was undertaken by Komin in 1978. She administered a 23-item instrumental values and 20-item terminal values list to a total of 2500 men and women from different segments of society stratified by geographic regions and occupations. Rokeach (1973) has referred to **terminal** values as desirable end-states of existence, i.e., goals that a person would like to achieve during his or her



lifetime; peace, equality, freedom, happiness, salvation etc. are terminal values. **Instrumental** values refers to preferable modes of behaviour, or means of achieving terminal values. Being courageous, forgiving, helpful, obedient, loving, etc. are seen as instrumental values. Komin's (1978) terminal values were derived from content analysis of two major newspapers over a whole month, of literature on Thai culture, as well as open-ended answers of sampled respondents. The instrumental values were derived from Anderson's (1968) list of 555 personality traits.

The results showed that religious value was one of the most important indicators distinguishing the rural from the urban Thais. Whilst rural Thais were characterized by 'other-oriented' mutually helpful community values and a deeply profound religious faith and spiritual life, urban Thais were found to be self-orientated, concerned with personal happiness, material comforts, pleasure and social recognition, with a drastic reduction in their religious values. Nevertheless, respondents from all groups and of all educational and socio-economic backgrounds were found to be fatalists with more rural Thais believing in *karma* (salvation) than urban Thais (83.8 per cent of the 921 rural respondents vs. 69.5 per cent of the 1543 urban samples). Women as a whole were found to be more fatalistic (stronger belief in *karma*) than men (81 per cent of 878 female samples against 71.6 per cent of male samples).

In a forced-choice statement between "maintenance of good and friendly relations" (person-orientation) as opposed to "seriousness and conscientiousness" (task-orientation) in work, 69.8 per cent of the urban Thai and 57.6 per cent of the rural Thai perceived maintenance of good relationships as more important than



conscientiousness in work. This supports the view that serious work is not as highly valued in Thailand as interpersonal relations. The inference drawn by Komin (1978) is that to be successful in Thai society does not depend so much on one's ability and competence as one's ability to choose the right patron and structure of opportunities. Once again, Buddhism and its precepts can be used in order to explain these findings. For instance, Sivaraksa (1981) in his writings on the effects of modernization on Buddhism has observed:

In the spirit of Buddhist development....the inner strength must be cultivated first; then compassion and loving-kindness to others becomes possible. Work and play would be interchangeable. There is no need to regard work as something which has to be done, has to be bargained for, in order to get more wages or get more leisure time. Work ethics would not be to get ahead of others but to enjoy one's work and to work in harmony with others. Materially there may not be too much to boast about, but the simple life ought to be comfortable enough, and simple food is less harmful to the body and mind.

Komin (1978) further explored differences in values held by Thai men and women. She observed that although Thai men and women do not differ in their ranking of certain deeply-rooted cultural values, i.e.; gratitude, honesty, ambition, broad-mindedness etc., there are a number of values that are differently espoused by males and females. Values most important for females, relative to males, were family happiness, security and success in life with equality and freedom ranking lower down in the scale. For men, on the other hand, values such as national security, equality, freedom, helping others, being religious, social recognition and material wealth were mentioned in order of importance. The author in summarizing the differences in value orientation between Thai males and females concluded that

the value profile of Thai men consists of traits of more other orientation, concern for society at large, high value for power and

politics, interdependence, mutual help as well as social recognition, peace of mind and inner harmony. The value profile of Thai women indicates such traits as self-orientation, less concern with societal issues of power and politics, freedom and equality. They possess such personal traits as sensitivity, empathy, non-assertiveness, value friendship and pleasurable social activities, engage more in small group activities and are gregarious and freer in expressing their feelings and emotions.

McClelland (1961) writing on the achievement needs within individuals in western societies, argued that high achievement needs promote entrepreneurial achievement or professional excellence, which in turn would propel economic growth. In a more recent study on Thai values, Komin (1990) in examining the nature of this dimension among Thais, found that the achievement value of being ambitious and hardworking to attain one's goals, has been consistently ranked as the least important value (the 23rd) in relation to the rest, with little variation across groups over time, with the exception of two groups; Thai businessmen who ranked it 19th and Thais of Chinese descent who ranked it 13th. For the majority of Thais, hard work as an achievement value ranked much lower than many of the social relationship values. Further, when exploring the motivation values among government sector officials as compared with those in the private sector, Komin (1990) found that the achievement motive was higher among the private sector officials. She attributed these higher scores to fair evaluation systems, participative management style and organization climates in which employees were rewarded for their creativity. In explaining why government sectors scored the lowest in task achievement value, Komin (1990) argued that it was meaningless to focus on individual achievement drive alone because the social demands of the working environment in the public sector are considered more important than



the task itself and it was the acquisition of power and prestige which was the basic motive, not work or professional excellence. In comparing the findings of her two studies on Thai values, Komin (1978, 1990) argued that while the more traditional values essential for maintaining social order are still stable, changes are occurring in urban Thais in the sphere of personal competence moving them towards a higher concern for independence and achievement, and a slightly lower concern for religion.

### **THAI CULTURE: ITS IMPACT ON MANAGERIAL PRACTICES**

In the previous section, essential Buddhist values as they relate to the daily lives of the Thai people were examined. In this section, the extent to which the cultural framework impacts workplace organization and behaviour is explored. The two researchers to conduct substantial surveys in the area of culture's impact on international management have been Hofstede (1980) and Trompenaars (1993) and hence their findings, especially in relation to Thailand, have been utilized in this section.

Culture has been defined in many ways. Kluckhohn (1951:86,5) quotes an anthropological definition:

Culture consists in patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values.



## **HOFSTEDE'S STUDY ON CULTURAL VALUES**

The data used for the empirical part of Hofstede's research were extracted from an existing bank of questionnaire results collected within subsidiaries of one large multinational in 40 countries and covered among others, many questions about values. The survey was held twice, around 1968 and around 1972, producing a total of over 116,000 questionnaires. Hofstede identified 4 dimensions of national culture:

1. Power Distance
2. Uncertainty Avoidance
3. Individualism/Collectivism
4. Masculinity/Femininity

**Power Distance:** The term 'power distance' is taken from the work of Mulder (1977:90), who defined power distance as 'the degree of inequality in power between the less powerful individual (I) and a more powerful other (O) in which I and O belong to the same social system'. In Hofstede's study, the level of power distance is measured by the Power Distance Index (PDI) which is derived from the mean score on three questions, i.e., superior's style of decision making, subordinates' fear of disagreeing with superiors, and the type of decision making which subordinates prefer in their boss. PDI scores differ strongly according to occupation, however there appears to be no significant differences in PDI between the sexes.

The PDI continuum scores ranging from 0 to 100 and a mean of 51, shows the Philippines as the highest (94) and Austria as the lowest (11). Thailand is placed well

above the average (64), Japan around the mean ( 54), the UK (35) and the US (40). In the high power distance countries, i.e., Thailand, Singapore, India, most superiors were perceived as inaccessible. The high scores obtained for Thailand are not surprising. As mentioned in an earlier section, Thai society is characterized by a rigid, hierarchical ordering of all social relations; in parent-child relations, husband-wife relations, politics, religion and economics the same superordinate-subordinate pattern applies. In all cases, people of lower status are expected to pay deference to those of higher status. This deference is shown both in the verbal forms of address for seniors as well as in the body language, i.e., greeting with hands folded and heads bowed (*wai*). In such a situation, people learn to behave submissively in the presence of superiors, rather than thrashing out things face to face. Even when there is no fear, they feel it is unnatural to speak up. The concept of high power distance is also reflected in the way subordinates acknowledge a manager's formal position by seldom bypassing the chain of command. In such cultures, employees tend not to prefer a consultative manager but to vote for the autocrat. On the other hand, when the PDI is low, subordinates and superiors are apt to regard one another as equal in power, and status, and they tend to prefer a consultative decision style. Moreover, organization structures were found to differ in low PDI countries. Hofstede found that they tended to be flatter, less centralized, had a smaller proportion of supervisors as well as lesser wage differentials between levels.

**Uncertainty Avoidance :** The second dimension of national culture has been labeled Uncertainty Avoidance (UA) by Hofstede (1980). UA indicates ways in which a society copes with living on the brink of an uncertain future. The three indicators used



are rule orientation, employment stability and stress and together these produce a country UA Index (UAI). Ways of coping with uncertainty belong to the cultural heritage of societies and are transferred and reinforced through basic institutions like the family, the school and the state. They are reflected in collectively-held values of the members of a particular society. In the UAI with a mean of 64, Greece ranks the highest (112) and Singapore, the lowest (8). Thailand falls exactly in the middle (64) and is classified with countries such as Germany, Taiwan and Iran.

Hofstede (1980) argues that if in a country there is a high level of uncertainty avoidance, then it is found that advancement to a manager's position, working for small organizations, competition among employees, individual decisions, working for foreign managers, and a high rate of organizational change, tend to be felt as risky situations, which fewer people are willing to face. A low UAI means by definition a greater willingness to take risks.

That Thailand has a middle of the continuum score instead of a lower UA is surprising if one considers several socio-religious factors. First, Buddhism, the dominant religion of Thailand, with its emphasis on the Middle Path, is less concerned with absolutes and more tolerant than either Catholicism or Hinduism. Hofstede has established a link between religion and uncertainty showing higher UA scores in countries with religions that stress absolute certainties and that are intolerant of other religions. Second, there is a tendency for countries scoring low on UA to think of hard work as not a virtue per se. Komin (1990) in her survey of Thai values has demonstrated that Thais rank working hard as far less important than other factors, i.e., relationships. Thirdly, in



countries with lower UA scores, there is a greater tolerance for deviant viewpoints, aggressive behaviour is frowned upon and in general, there is less show of emotions. An earlier section on Thai values as influenced by Buddhism, show that all the above are socially acceptable forms of behaviour. When Thais in organizations have disagreements, the ideal approach is to continue superficially cordial relations without engaging in open debate or challenging the other's actions or ideas. Lastly, lower UA scoring countries have the characteristics of looser societies. The loosely-structured paradigm of Embree (1950) and the work of Phillips (1965) both argue that Thai society is one which allows considerable variation in individual behaviour, with high degree of freedom of choice and one in which people have a determined lack of regularity, discipline and regimentation in their lives.

**Individualism:** The third dimension of national culture is labeled Individualism by Hofstede (1980). It describes the relationship between the individual and collectivity in a given society and is reflected in the way people live, for example, in nuclear or extended families or tribes. This dimension is intimately linked with societal norms and the structure and functioning of many other institutions, besides the family; educational, religious, political and utilitarian. For example, the norm prevalent in a given society as to the degree of individuality/collectivism expected from its members will strongly affect the nature of the relationship between the person and the organizations to which he/she belongs. The level of individualism/collectivism also dictates what type of persons will be admitted into positions of special influence in organizations. More individualistic societies call for emotional independence from the

company, more importance attached to freedom and challenge on the job, autonomy, and individual initiative.

On the Country Individualism Index (IDV) with a mean of 51, the USA ranks highest with 91, and Venezuela, lowest with a score of 12. Thailand ranks well below mean at 20, and is clustered with other Asian countries such as Hong Kong (25), Singapore (20) and Taiwan(17). There appears to be a paradox in the descriptions of both Phillips (1965) and Embree (1950) of Thais as people possessing a strong individualistic dimension and Hofstede's (1980) findings, in which Thailand's low IDV score places it among countries strongly orientated towards collectivism.

Whilst Buddhist tenets emphasize that merit-making and reaching salvation are based on individual action, it also emphasizes that these cannot be obtained unless one learns to work in harmony with others. In Western culture, individuals hold the belief that anything that would violate their right to think for themselves, judge for themselves, make their own decisions, live their lives as they see fit, is not only morally wrong, but sacrilegious (Bellah et al, 1985). In Thai society, individualism as practiced in the West is not generally accepted as a social value, because individuals seek identity not so much in terms of who they are as in terms of whom they are associated with. Within Thai culture one has a strong obligation to one's family and close friends. This obligation means being able to offer assistance, within one's ability when called upon to do so. This sense of loyalty extends to the hierarchical relationships as well. For instance, it is quite surprising for Westerners to observe the extent to which Thai superiors and subordinates are involved in the **familial** activities of each other.



Marriages, birthdays and funerals are treated as human-centred activities and just as the company's business demands the attention of all employees, attendance at these events is considered just as important. Wichienrajote's (1973) description of Thais as a people who are affiliative, dependent on each other, who find their security in patronage rather than individualism, fits in more with Hofstede's (1980) placement of Thailand as a country with a low IDV score. Thus, the "individualism" which underlies merit-making as a means to seeking salvation, as espoused in Buddhism, is very different to the "individualism" dimension reflected in Hofstede's study.

**Masculinity:** Perhaps the most critical dimension for the current study is Hofstede's fourth, entitled Masculinity. Hofstede (1980) has assembled the various correlates of the Masculinity Index (MAS) into a coherent picture of 'masculine' and 'feminine' types of national culture. Masculine behaviour for instance, is associated with autonomy, aggression, exhibition, and domination, whilst feminine behaviour with nurturance, affiliation, helpfulness and humility. The MAS is based on a range from 0 to 100, with a mean of 51 and measures to what extent respondents in a country tend to endorse goals usually perceived as masculine. The list of countries with high masculinity scores are Japan (95), UK (60) and the US (62), while most Asian countries, other than Japan, such as Korea (42) and Thailand (34), have scores in the middle. At the lower end, are the four Nordic countries, with Sweden, ranking lowest on the scale with a score of 5.

Countries with higher MAS, show greater differences between men and women in the same jobs. In more 'masculine' countries, the values of men and women in the same



occupations tend to be more different than in more 'feminine' countries. In the two most feminine countries, i.e., Sweden and Norway, women scored almost as masculine as their male counterparts in the same occupations. However, in countries that were more 'masculine', different results were evident. In Japan, Australia and Brazil, female experts differed even more than their male colleagues. In these countries, women probably did not feel that they were seriously competing with men. MAS is also significantly negatively correlated with the percentage of women in professional/technical jobs and positively with the segregation of sexes in higher education. In comparing 38 occupations for sex differences, in all countries, Hofstede (1980) found that across these occupations, there were significant sex difference trends, i.e., advancement, earnings, training and being up-to-date ranked as more important to men, whereas, friendly atmosphere, security in the position, physical conditions, and cooperation appeared as more important to women. Although no significant sex differences were found for job content goals, and for private life goals, the author argued that the sex roles which determine the reference groups of men and women when they score their goal priorities, are pervasive in the modern industrialized world.

Hofstede (1980) also reported several relationships between MAS and other variables. For example, respondents in countries with high MAS scores had higher stress levels, a consequence generally associated with 'being tough' and not showing emotions. Masculinity was also associated with support for the large, impersonal corporation, while feminine patterns were more associated with the 'small is beautiful' company. Hofstede (1980) has further argued that if the degree of masculinity or femininity of a

country's dominant value system is related to sex role differentiation, it should reflect also the role of women in society. Thus, he observes: 'in more feminine countries, more working women are in qualified jobs and in higher education, the same courses tend to be taken by women and men (p.203-4).

Sex-role differentiation is not necessarily consistent however. A study by Komarovsky (1976) among male US students showed considerable strain between new equalitarian sex-role norms on the one hand, and a deeper need for adhering to a traditional male role on the other. Much of societal masculinity-femininity differences are both historically and traditionally determined and the mechanisms for the conservation of these differences are solid. Hofstede (1980) argues that the strongly feminine scores of the Scandinavian countries is because of their cultural heritage from Viking society in which women had to manage the villages while men went away on long trips. A similar explanation can also be offered for Thailand's relatively high feminine scores, for during the early part of the century, it was women who managed their homes, families and villages while the men were away for long periods, serving as bonded labour in the service of the king. Thus, high or low MAS scores can be attributed to a country's historical/traditional origins.

In summary, Thailand according to Hofstede (1980) is a country that exhibits large power distance (as characterized in the tall organization structures in organizations, and by managers who make decisions autocratically and paternalistically), moderate uncertainty avoidance (as evident in the containment of conflict and confrontation, loose society and limited regimentation); low individualism (demonstrated in strong



affiliative ties among employees, promotion from within, and policies and practices based on loyalty and a sense of duty); and femininity (emphasized by more women in qualified and well-paid jobs, as small-scale entrepreneurs, and weaker achievement motivation of the general population).

Despite criticisms levelled against Hofstede concerning whether generalizations can be drawn from a sample of just one multinational corporation (Hunt, 1981) and the fact that he did not differentiate between ethnic groups in countries such as US, Canada, Malaysia and Belgium, it is generally acknowledged that the four dimensions are of importance in understanding different cultures. The differences demonstrated between cultures in Hofstede's (1980) research also challenge the validity of the transfer of theories and working methods from one country to another.

## **TROMPENAARS' STUDY ON CULTURAL VALUES**

Trompenaars (1993) offers additional insights of how culture impacts upon management practices. Administering his research instrument to over 15,000 managers in 28 countries, Thailand being one among these, he employed the same five fundamental dimensions of culture, which Talcott Parsons (1951) developed to describe and evaluate the cultural and economic accomplishments of nations. Trompenaars (1993) research is employed in the current study because his findings, in addition to those of Hofstede's, aid in increasing our understanding of the significance of Thai culture in work-related relationships, management techniques and organization structures. His five dimensions are described briefly in the following paragraphs.



**Universalism vs. Particularism:** Universalism applies when people believe that what is true and good can be applied everywhere (the same rule applies to all), whereas particularism is said to prevail where unique circumstances and relationships are more important considerations in determining what is right and good, rather than abstract rules (this person is my friend, brother, husband or a person of importance to me and so the rule can be changed). Particularist groups seek gratification through relationships, especially relationships with leaders. Generally the more particularist a society, the greater the commitment between employer and employee. The employer in these cultures strives to provide a broad array of satisfaction to employees; security, money, social standing, goodwill and socio-emotional support. The distribution of scores across 28 countries demonstrated a separation between West and East, with most Western countries (US, UK, Denmark, Canada) falling under universalism, and most Asian cultures, such as Thailand, under particularism. This finding is corroborated by both Komin's (1990) research which showed Thais value relationships, especially with superiors in the workplace very highly, as well as Hanks' (1975) description of Thailand as an society in which the patron-client relationship is of extreme importance.

Trompenaars (1993) also demonstrated the impact of this dimension on HR practices, for example, in universalistic cultures, there is a need for all jobs to be described, all candidates' qualifications matched against these descriptions, and their performance evaluated against clearly specified standards. In particularist cultures, it is not uncommon to find organizations selecting people for jobs without proper job

descriptions or evaluative criteria. In fact, Lawler et al (1989) who surveyed firms in Thailand in terms of HR policies found that, among Thai-owned firms, staffing was informally conducted and a relationship with the owner or members of his immediate family often served as the criterion for obtaining a job or being promoted.

**Individualism vs. Collectivism:** Individualism has been described by Parsons and Shils (1951) as a prime orientation to the self and collectivism as a prime orientation to common goals and objectives. Trompenaars' (1993) findings indicate that the highest scoring individualists are Canadians, Americans, Norwegians and Spaniards, whilst natives of France, Greece, Kuwait and most Asian countries are collectivists. Both Trompenaars' (1993) and Hofstede's (1980) studies place Thailand among countries which have collectivist cultures. Both authors also argue that this dimension stems from religion, for example, both studies demonstrate that Latin Catholic cultures along with Asian cultures of the Pacific Rim, score lower on individualism than the Protestant West, i.e., UK, Scandinavia, the Netherlands, Germany, America and Canada.

Trompenaars (1993) argued that individualism-collectivism strongly impacts on many aspects of management, i.e., negotiations, decision-making and motivation. Practices such as promotion for recognized achievements and pay-for-performance, for example assume that individuals seek to be distinguished within the group and that their colleagues approve of this happening. They also rest on the assumption that the contribution of any one member to a common task is easily distinguishable and that no problems arise from singling him/her out for praise. None of this may be true for



collectivist cultures. Lawler et al (1989) commenting on the use of formal evaluation techniques by western-based multinational firms in Thailand, reported that Thai employees resented pay-for-performance systems, because open criticism of performance and intense interpersonal competition, are both alien to Thai culture. Similarly, Tan and Tseng (1989) in their writing on cultural values in Southeast Asian countries, emphasized the great significance attached to 'saving face' in these cultures and the inability of appraisals as used in the West, to reflect actual performance.

Individualism also affects the way organizations are structured. In collectivist cultures, organizations are often likened to a large family, a social context all members share and which gives them meaning and purpose. Redding and Baldwin (1991) in summarizing Asian-Pacific organization structures, found a web of relationship flows, based on mutual obligations, with relationships between organizations also commonly stronger than those of the West.

**Neutral vs. Emotional :** This dimension concerned the ways in which individuals in certain cultures choose to express emotions. Members of cultures which are neutral keep their feelings carefully controlled and subdued. In contrast, in cultures high on affectivity, people show their feelings plainly by laughing, smiling, grimacing etc.; they attempt to find immediate outlets for their feelings. According to Trompenaars (1993) exhibiting emotion was least acceptable in Japan, followed by Germany, Indonesia, the UK, and Thailand. Countries with affective relationships were Italy, France and the US. In Hofstede's (1980) research, the willingness to express emotion is seen as part of uncertainty avoidance. Komin's (1990) research on values, which depicts Thais as a



people who endeavour to avoid conflict and confrontation at all costs, together with the teachings of Buddhism, which espouses a detachment from emotions, reflect Trompenaars' placement of Thailand among countries high on neutral relationships.

The implications of being a neutral culture impacts Thai management practice in two ways. One, people coming from affective cultures, who take up managerial positions in Thailand, often face frustration in communications, because Thais do not reveal, either verbally or through body language, what they are thinking or feeling. One of the most frequent problems that expatriate managers experienced while working with Thais was their 'lack of directness' (Smith, 1979). Second, it becomes difficult for managers to provide negative feedback to Thai subordinates because such feedback creates ill-feelings in the relationship. The strong emphasis on neutrality could also provide a justification for the low representation of Thai women in senior management. In a survey, senior executives perceived Thai women as more emotional than men, weak and indecisive, and more suited to domestic roles (Siengthai et al, 1993).

**Specific vs. Diffuse:** This dimension deals with the degree of involvement individuals are comfortable with when dealing with others. It is closely linked to the previous affective vs. neutral dimension, in the sense that the degree to which we show emotions in dealing with other people can be in specific areas of our lives or diffusely, in multiple areas of our lives. In specific-oriented cultures, a manager segregates out the task-relationship he/she has with a subordinate and insulates this from other dealings. In diffuse cultures, a person's private and public spheres are connected; a boss is treated with deference and in the same manner as when he/she is in the office,

irrespective of whether one meets him/her in the street, club or shop. Typically diffuse cultures are Mexico, France, much of Southern Europe, and most countries in Asia. Those countries with more specificity are Australia, the Netherlands, UK, Switzerland, Germany and the US.

Specific and diffuse cultures are sometimes called 'low' and 'high' context; the context referring to how much one has to know before effective communication can occur. Cultures with high context such as Japan and France require that strangers must be 'filled in' before business is discussed. People in low contexts, on the other hand, such as the UK or US, believe that communication should be precise, blunt, definitive and criticisms made, independent of the person being addressed.

Specific-diffuse cultures also have an impact on many HR policies. For instance, pay for promotion is not popular in diffuse cultures because it can arbitrarily sever relationships. Similarly, MBO (Management by Objectives), a system whereby objectives are agreed upon by boss and subordinates and later evaluated with the idea that satisfactory objectives achieved by subordinates can enhance their relationship with their bosses, does not appear to work in diffuse cultures. This is because people in these cultures believe that it is the relationship between a boss and subordinate that leads to achievement of objectives, not the other way round.

In Thailand, the diffuseness of the culture is exhibited in several ways. The importance attached to 'saving face' is why so much time is consumed getting to the point. Because of the class-based social structure, many linguistic devices are used to convey



subtle distinctions in social rank, for example, different first and second-person pronouns are used to express dominance or deference towards others during conversations. In seminars and conferences, it is extremely difficult for Thais to critique the speaker's ideas, most feedback is given in the form of suggestions.

**Achievement vs. Ascription :** This cultural dimension deals with how status and power in an organization are determined. In achievement-oriented countries, business people are evaluated by how well they perform an allocated task/behaviour. In ascriptive societies, status is attributed to those who 'naturally' evoke admiration in others; older people, males, or highly-qualified people. While achieved status refers to *doing*, ascribed status refers to *being*. While achievement-oriented managers justify their hierarchies by claiming that senior people achieve more for the organization because their authority benefits the organization, ascription-oriented societies justify their hierarchies as central to creativity, i.e., power to get things done.

Religion also has a part to play in the way the people in a culture accord status. For example, people in Catholic countries ascribe status to more passive ways of living. Hinduism associates practical achievements with delusion. Buddhism teaches detachment from earthly concerns. All these are forms of ascribed status. Trompenaars (1993) observes that many cultures that had previously ascribed status to age, gender, and social connections (especially the Asian-Pacific Rim countries), are now changing to ascribe status to persons, technologies or industries, which they anticipate, will be more important to their future as an economy.



Thai society is ascription-oriented in the way respect is accorded to members of the Royal Family, monks, seniors and males in general. If rewards are distributed in organizations, it is expected that these will be given based on seniority rather than merit, which is also a reason why systems such as pay-for-performance and bonus do not work well. In the highly diffused Thai society, it is the leader who bequeaths status to his/her subordinates, as explained in the concept of *bunkun*, in an earlier section. If a leader does something to reduce his/her own status, all his/her subordinates are downgraded as a consequence. A leader's performance is not the result of his/her own skill, it is partly determined by the loyalty and affection shown by subordinates. The ascription-orientation of Thai society is particularly evident among public sector employees and because males, particularly those middle-aged and of relatively high social standing, are accorded higher status, it is not surprising to find that a large percentage of senior management positions are occupied by males in this sector.

There are some similarities and differences between Hofstede's (1980) and Trompenaar's (1993) study. Although they use different names for the dimensions in their respective studies, many of the findings appear consistent, at least those related to Thai culture. For instance both studies show that Thais prefer autocratic decision making (Hofstede's high PDI and Trompenaar's 'diffused' society dimension). Both studies also place Thailand among countries orientated towards collectivism. Hofstede's placement of Thailand among countries with moderate uncertainty avoidance is also consistent with Trompenaar's assessment of Thailand as a country which has neutrality rather than affectivity. The only major difference in terms of the findings is whereas Hofstede's study shows Thailand as a country exhibiting stronger

feminine values, Trompenaar's findings suggest that Thailand is among those countries in which status is accorded by ascription which means that masculine values are predominant. However the findings on this dimension could differ because Trompenaars in his achievement-ascription dimension utilized variables such as age, family background, education, and even religion (factors which Hofstede's MAS dimension do not consider). Trompenaars (1993) findings are of particular relevance to this study because his analysis has shown how cultural differences influence human resource management. For example, he has explained why techniques such as performance related pay and management by objectives are not popular in Asian countries, including Thailand. Or even why newer organization structures, i.e., matrix are less likely to work with Thai subordinates. Lastly, his assessment of Thailand as an ascription-orientated country could also provide an explanation for the placement of women in lower positions in the managerial hierarchy.

The study thus far has examined Buddhist-based values and has also looked at Thailand's cultural context from surveys made by Hofstede (1980) and Trompenaars (1993). These two studies as well as with those of other researchers, (Pongsapich et al, 1985; Komin, 1978; Smith, 1979), who have studied Thai samples, are integrated to provide a summary of the main features of Thai managerial practice.

## **MAIN FEATURES OF THAI MANAGERIAL PRACTICES**

Thai managers demonstrate little predisposition towards participative management practices characterized by subordinate involvement in providing ideas and making



decisions. Both Thai managers and employees were also found to be accepting of close supervision. Because of the 'ascriptive' nature of Thai society and the hierarchical organization structures, Thai bosses remained relatively aloof and remote from subordinates and were not required to maintain close personal relations with them. Consistent with the identified traditional Asian predilection towards collectivism, Thai managers reflected a disposition towards group rather than individual focus of control and performance appraisal systems based on team rather than individual work. Both managers and subordinates tended to perceive conflicts as undesirable, and both groups also tended to believe that managerial appointments should be based on a range of criteria, with seniority being the most important.

### **Principal Characteristics Of Business Organizations In Thailand**

Before embarking on an account of HR practices and their impact on the employment of managers, it is necessary to briefly sketch here some of the main features of present-day Thai businesses. Large firms in Thailand are highly dominant in both employment and investment. Indeed, it would appear that large firms have played a more significant role in Thailand's economic performance than in that of other industrialized countries (Suehiro, 1992). These large firms are categorized as state and other public enterprises, foreign or multinational enterprises, and fully Thai-owned enterprises, many of which have combined into a smaller number of conglomerate groups, which emerged after the 1960s (Suehiro, 1985). If firms are classified in accordance with their total assets, the largest groups are financial conglomerates, based on commercial banks. Of the 100 largest corporate groups, including multinational enterprises operating in Thailand, Thai capital represents only 61 of the top 100 groups. Domestic



large firms and business groups are mostly dominated either by a single family or a group of families. In 1983, around 66,000 out of 109,000 registered private firms at the Ministry of Commerce were limited partnerships. The balance of 38,000 firms were private limited companies, which have no obligation to offer their stocks on the market (Maolanond and Yasuda, 1985). It is also usual that the head of a family is the largest shareholder of a company and frequently exerts total power over the company's management. It is true that over the past decade, major shares in large enterprises are being transferred from individual and family ownership to corporate organizations, but examination reveals that these organizations are often wholly owned by a particular family or related families. As mentioned in an earlier section, almost all the owners and controllers of Thailand's largest firms are descendants of overseas Chinese, most of whom are locally born, hold Thai nationality and use the Thai language, the majority being educated entirely in Thai schools.

### **Human Resource Strategies employed by Firms in Thailand**

Thailand has an extensive statutory framework governing employment relations, including a minimum wage and certain safeguards for unions. However, enforcement is not pursued strongly and avoidance by organizations is a possibility. Despite a significant labour surplus in Thailand, as in other developing countries, Thailand still faces areas of skills shortages, particularly in computing and electronics. While unskilled resources are plentiful, companies may prefer to hire only those with work experience, to save on training costs, and such individuals are harder to locate. Among firms that hire unskilled labour, there is also a problem with labour supply as many

workers return to their villages for planting and harvesting. Filling professional and managerial positions with Thai nationals is generally more difficult especially if a company prefers to recruit only those who have had been educated abroad or those who are fluent in English or any other language.

Since Thailand has such a large proportion of foreign-owned firms, it is possible to observe a variety of management practices and their effectiveness in the Thai context. The comparative studies of work values, examined in the previous section, can be placed within the larger context of what has been referred to as the convergence/divergence debate. Convergence theorists would assert that cultural convergence, driven by the rapid spread of technology, makes it possible for MNCs to apply relatively identical HRM practices across countries (Sparrow et al, 1994; Dunphy, 1987). Conversely, divergence theorists still appreciate the importance of the uniqueness of each culture, therefore they recognize the need to adapt management practices to the local environment (Brewster and Tyson, 1993; Brewster and Larson, 1992). Hofstede and Bond (1988) for example, argued that similar cultural values associated with 'Confucian Dynamism', such as persistence and thrift, allow for a shared cultural grouping of Chinese-culture-based countries, i.e., Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore. In these countries we might assume that the same managerial practices would be applicable. Nevertheless, a more recent study by Paik et al (1996) demonstrated significant differences among Chinese-culture-based countries that have often been clustered in cultural homogeneity. For example, in examining the appropriateness of appraisal design similarity in the Chinese-based countries, i.e., Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong, the authors noted a particularly strong divergent



effect between managers from Hong Kong and Taiwan, whose responses differed on half of the survey items. They concluded that in effect, identical management practices across these countries could be ill-matched and strongly supported the employment of divergence perspective in these countries.

Lawler et al (1989) studied 29 large to medium firms which operated in and around Bangkok. The authors commenting on the uniqueness of Thai values and behaviour, pointed to the incompatibility of the US management's characteristics of individuality, formality and competitiveness as opposed to the more social or humanistic expectations of the local Thai culture. Classifying HR strategies according to the firms' countries of origin, and in the case of Thai firms, their ownership, the authors' observations are summarized below.

Managers in western subsidiaries, i.e., British and American, of multinational firms were seen to be largely constrained by corporate HR strategy and related policies. They implemented strategy locally within guidelines established at corporate level whilst local managers kept in regular contact with corporate HR staff through periodic regional and worldwide meetings. Such firms had structured labour markets (staffing practices clearly favoured the selection and advancement of those fluent in English with previous work experience in a foreign firm); paid relatively higher wages (50-100 per cent more than Japanese firms); used formal job evaluation offering rapid advancement for higher performing employees, and avoided unionization.



In contrast to western firms which seek out personnel already sensitized to corporate expectations, Japanese firms endeavoured to reshape workers' values and perceptions after hiring them, through extensive orientation and training, so as to achieve a fit between workers and the management system. Despite low pay, Japanese firms were still able to attract a large number of job applicants, a reflection of the excess supply of labour in Bangkok. These firms had relatively unstructured labour markets, and relied extensively on networking for selecting employees. Two more differences emerged between Western and Japanese MNCs. First, unlike western subsidiaries with their fully-fledged HR department, the Japanese firms in Thailand did not have a separate HR department, the general manager or other senior manager usually taking responsibility for HR activities. Second, although like western firms, Japanese firms avoided unionization, unlike western firms, Japanese firms encouraged employee participation, with quality circles used extensively. What was very appealing to Thai workers was the Japanese willingness to accommodate and support the use of informal social networks as means of communication and conflict resolution.

Thai-owned firms can be classified into two categories; The Family Enterprise and Thai Corporations. Despite several locally-owned companies starting real management reform during the 1980s, by way of modernizing their structures, better mobilization of investment funds and improved human resource practices, most firms, even large-sized ones, retained core aspects of Thai culture and social practices in their management.

The Family Enterprise had been, until recently the dominant form of business organization in Thailand. Virtually all key management slots were occupied by relatives

of the owner and a strategic theme in the HR practices of family enterprises could be characterized as social control. This was maintained through class distinction; lower levels defer to higher level employees, older or more senior employees often served as intermediaries with upper management or supervisors to help resolve conflicts/express dissatisfaction. In this way, proper social distance between individuals was maintained, since improper familiarity might threaten the notion of inequality and diminished perceived status differences. There was no clear-cut HR function in family enterprises and most policies were developed on an ad hoc basis by the owner. Having contact with someone in the family, preferably the owner or the members of his immediate family, was often critical to obtaining a job in these firms, even in low-level positions. Although loyalty and commitment to the owner were features of traditional Thai systems, they were not demanded to the same extent as Japanese firms expect of their employees.

In surveying HR policies of contemporary Thai Corporations, Lawler et al (1989) observed a hybrid of the family enterprise and the western multinational corporation. For example, while family members of key employees had an advantage in obtaining jobs in these firms, a large number of managers and professionals were hired from outside, and many search and screening devices, patterned after western models, were utilized. Again, while authority based on social class, and disputes resolved in an informal and non-conflictive manner were still features, Lawler et al (1989) observed the increasing degree of professionalism in the structure and practices of the HR departments in these firms. An important reason for this merger of Thai and western practices in such firms is that a large number of managers employed therein were



graduates of American and European business schools or Thai universities which have developed their management curricula on the US system. Owing to the higher pay and prestige associated with employment in western multinationals, attracting and maintaining technically competent managers and professionals was of paramount importance to these firms. Reflecting human resource shortages and the perceived need to develop technically sophisticated managers, Thai corporations not only experimented with Japanese techniques, such as quality circles, but also engaged in extensive and highly sophisticated formal training and management development programmes.

#### **SUMMARY:**

The objective of this chapter was to present an overview of the historic background, social and cultural environment of Thailand and to attempt to link the impact of these to the employment practices within organizations in Thailand. As seen in the foregoing sections, Thai society was exposed to two major cultural influences, the principles implicit in Theravada Buddhism, which underpin unique Thai values and the pragmatic influence of the Confucian culture of the Chinese. In Thailand, religion and society are integrated to such an extent that in social, moral or even educational centres, it is impossible to divorce oneself from the influence of organized religion. Religion also forms the base for many managerial practices, i.e., hierarchical order, sense of obligation, non-confrontation as a conflict-reducing strategy, and even occupational segregation.



The continuing importance of these values is confirmed by Hofstede's (1980) placement of Thailand on four cultural dimensions, i.e., power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity and individualism/collectivism. Thailand emerged as a culture characterized by high power distances, moderate uncertainty avoidance, low individualism and with low masculinity. Trompenaars' (1993) placement of Thailand among cultures in which particularism, collectivism, diffusion, neutrality and ascription rank high, confirms Hofstede's major findings. Both studies can help to explain among other things, why relationships between Thai bosses and subordinates are strictly determined by social rank, why subordinates prefer paternalistic/authoritarian leaders or why group incentives work better in Thailand than individual incentives. Other researchers who have studied samples of Thai managers in the workplace have concurred with Hofstede's (1980) and Trompenaar's (1993) research by providing examples of actual managerial behaviour in the workplace.

Finally, the differences between HR policies in Western and Japanese multinationals and Thai-owned firms were explored. Whilst both Western and Japanese MNCs relied primarily on expatriates in senior positions, middle and lower-level managerial positions were entirely staffed by Thai nationals. Such firms implemented HR strategy locally within guidelines established by the parent company. There appeared to be major differences in recruiting methods, selection techniques, pay scales and performance appraisal between firms.

This chapter raises many interesting questions for the present study. For example, how do the social, political and economic constraints as described in the earlier sections

impact on the employment of women in general and specifically, on Thai women as managers? Do the workplace values as defined by Hofstede and Trompenaars have an influence on the numbers and types of women selected as managers? Furthermore, are the workplace practices of multinational corporations less discriminative and more opportunity-orientated for women, than Thai-owned firms? These and other key issues will become clearer on examining the past and present status of Thai women in the ensuing chapter.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN THAI SOCIETY**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

This chapter provides background information on Thai women including their educational levels, their workforce participation, the effects of industrialization on their employment patterns and their representation in public and private organizations. The chapter also draws on literature relating to women in the neighbouring Asian countries in general, to ensure a broad frame of analysis of the key issues pertaining to their development and status. Although Thai women have been active participants in the labour force for almost three decades, researching their status poses three problems. First, there is a lack of reliable and relevant data outlining the position of Thai women over time. Second, contradictions exist in the literature over the actual position of women in Thai society. Third, much of the literature on women has appeared only in the Thai language making it inaccessible to a wider international readership. The issues presented in this chapter are intended to give the reader a general impression of Thai women's lives and experiences, and also to provide a backdrop to the materials presented in subsequent chapters.

#### **WOMEN AND INDUSTRIALIZATION IN ASIA:**

As stated earlier, Thailand has within the past two decades moved rapidly from being an agricultural society to being an industrialized one. Before studying the changes in employment brought about by such a move in Thailand, it is worth first examining the



long-term effects of capitalist industrialization on women's productive activities in developing countries, particularly those in Asia. The factors which at the macro level influence women's participation in the industrial and related sectors are of two types: on one side there are the trends in international trade and manufacturing, while on the other there is the role played by national states in deciding on industrialization strategies (Heyzer, 1988). The current pattern is that capital goods tend to be produced in Western, industrialized countries, while the developing countries produce consumer goods and light industrial products. This deployment, together with an increased emphasis by many developing countries on export-oriented production, has been associated with a considerable increase in the numbers of women employed in manufacturing. Another important feature of industrial development is the persistence and growth of forms of production outside the factory-based system. Home-based units, workshops and the like still produce a vast range of marketable goods. Whilst a large number of women are employed in industrial work, women who have no access to this kind of work are 'traditionally' involved in trade and service sectors. For example in the mid-1980s, women constituted up to 70 per cent of service workers and more than 50 per cent of those in the sub-sector of social and personal services. Similarly, trade is a large employer of women, absorbing between 30 per cent and 40 per cent world-wide (ILO, 1988).

A study of the effects of industrialization on women's productive activities in a seven countries study (India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand), by Horton (1996) identified two broad findings. First, the process of industrialization itself seems to create certain similarities in women's work in all

countries, notwithstanding the large socio-economic differences between countries. Second, women's participation in the urban market economy of Asia has been increasing, not only in production-related occupations, but also in other occupations including those higher-paid professional and administrative ones.

Horton (1996) also observed interesting differences in age-participation profiles for women in different regions in Asia. At least three different patterns were characterized. The 'double-peaked' pattern whereby women participated prior to marriage and child bearing, and then returned to the labour force. A 'single-peaked' pattern of early participation without a later return to the labour force. And the third pattern described as 'plateau' which was more evident in rural areas, whereby women continued their labour force participation with little interruption for child-rearing. The 'single-peaked' pattern was identified in Singapore and Hong Kong which Lim (1993) attributed to Chinese-Confucian cultural beliefs that married women should give primacy to the needs of their families. Japan and Korea exhibited a 'double-peaked' pattern which was more similar to that of industrialized countries, with exit after marriage and return after childrearing. Lim (1993) describes Thailand, the Philippines and Malaysia and Indonesia as following a 'high plateau' pattern, which she attributes to the less age-selective nature of female employment in agriculture or in domestic service, petty trade or handicrafts where the combination of childcare and work was possible. The South Asian countries, i.e., Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India and Pakistan were seen as following a 'low plateau' pattern, which was attributable to the cultural sanctions against women participating in the work force.



Horton (1996) in studying the impact of legislation on women's employment in the seven Asian countries reported above, observed that equal opportunity legislation was relatively new, and had varying degrees of enforcement in most of these countries. Whilst India, Indonesia, Japan and the Philippines were all signatories to ILO Convention 100 on equal pay for equal work, and both Korea and Thailand also had domestic legislation to the same effect, countries such as Malaysia had few laws prohibiting discrimination. Even in countries with anti-discrimination legislation, there were numerous instances of discrimination against women. For example, in Indonesia, there is legislation prohibiting discrimination against anyone in employment, which implicitly prohibits discrimination against women; however family law recognized the husband as head of the household, and discrimination against married women in hiring is permitted. Similarly, in Thailand, marriage bars still persist and sex-segregated job advertisements are tolerated. In India, sex-segregated job advertisements are also common. Horton (1996) argues that domestic legislation is of limited value if there is no enforcement, and enforcement of provisions affecting women are particularly difficult in countries such as India, where large numbers are employed in informal sectors.

Foreign multinationals have also had an influence on the employment of Asian women, but that influence has not always been positive. For example, Hutchings (1996) addressed issues relating to occupational health and safety (OHS) and equal employment opportunities (EEO) as they applied in selected Australian and Japanese corporations operating in Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia. She reported that despite the existence of formal legislation in these countries, informal political, social and



cultural practices have a considerable bearing on management practices. For instance, in her comparison of companies operating in both Australia and Southeast Asia, Hutchings (1996) found that whilst there were no special privileges, i.e., positive discrimination, extended to women in all of the companies, the employment conditions of women in Australia were better than those in Southeast Asia. She argues that 'while much of the difference may be attributed to historical, social and cultural factors in Southeast Asia, some multinational firms have nonetheless taken advantage of a lack of protective legislation to obtain a cheaper, more compliant workforce' (p.65).

### **Women Managers in Southeast Asia**

No data on women in management in Southeast Asia existed prior to the mid 1980s. The first study of women managers in Southeast Asia was conducted by Hoffarth (1987) who studied 275 self-administered questionnaires from women managers across the five Southeast Asian countries (Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines). Lacking a source from which the women in management population could be systematically sampled, the survey was done using the so-called 'purposive sampling method'. This involved consulting executives in large business organizations, business publications editors, and listings in business directories in order to generate potential respondents. Moreover, the paucity of information on Southeast Asian women managers, other than anecdotal references, meant that research from secondary sources was also unavailable. Notwithstanding such limitations, the study helped to uncover, for the first time, some commonalities and differences in backgrounds among these women managers, and these will be discussed below.

**Age:** Women managers in Southeast Asia were often young, with over 50 per cent of the sample in the 30-40 age bracket, testifying to the relatively recent phenomenon of women's presence in executive positions in the region. Exceptions to this, were the Philippines and Thailand which had a higher representation of women in the older age bracket (over 50). The youngest managers were found in Singapore where opportunities brought about by high economic growth rates propelled women, generally underrepresented in management up until then, into positions of responsibility within a relatively short time.

**Education:** Educational opportunities have traditionally been most equitably shared by men and women in Thailand and the Philippines, and women from these two countries are the most highly educated women managers. With respect to sectors, women managers working for non-profit (governmental organizations) had the highest likelihood of obtaining graduate education as a result of the educational benefits generally made available to them. Corporate women on the other hand, had good educational credentials because these were part of their entry qualifications. The least educated were entrepreneurial women, who had the least need for obtaining formal academic degrees because business acumen is generally gained via apprenticeship and experience rather than formal schooling.

**Socio-economic status:** The majority of women managers in the sample came from families with at least middle-bracket income. This highlights the fact that opportunities for managerial positions generally remain outside the purview of lower-income



workers. In corporations, education and formal training are requisites for professional management positions and since women from low-income backgrounds generally lack both, most avenues for participation in corporate management were closed to them.

**Family-orientation:** The women managers tended to be middle children of large families, i.e., they were neither eldest nor youngest. However, when birth order positions were further desegregated so that each birth order position was represented, e.g., eldest, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, etc. they tended to be the oldest daughter. This may indicate that personal aspiration to achieve might have been strongly influenced by childhood training and parental expectations from eldest children. Moreover, the fact that a significant number of these women were senior managers in family firms, indicated that the line of succession in Southeast Asian family firms is not necessarily reserved for eldest sons.

Not surprisingly, compared to the population at large, the parents of women managers tended to have high educational attainments. However, most mothers were usually housewives, except in the Philippines which had a higher percentage of mothers who were professionals or in business. Role modelling was likewise apparent: entrepreneurs tended to come from a family of entrepreneurs, corporate managers had fathers who were professional executives.

**Marriage and Parenthood:** Women managers tended to marry men who were as highly trained as themselves, or even better. This reflects the tendency for Asian women not to marry down the social ladder. Almost one in four women managers



were unmarried, a figure higher than the population average. This could reflect the unusual demands at work for women managers, the difficulty of balancing career and family life, and the paucity of suitable men to marry once women reach a certain level in the organizational ladder. Moreover, indicators seem to point that these women marry later than the population average. Many middle managers and even some of the older senior managers in the sample, were still raising pre-schoolers. Likewise, in contrast to the families that they came from, where they had numerous siblings, women managers tended to raise only 2-4 children.

**Career Path and Compensation:** The managers in the sample had displayed organizational loyalty in the sense that many have stayed with the same organization for several years. However the climb upwards had not been easy, many had spent ten to twenty years in one organization before reaching their current position. For their efforts, women managers received a compensation package significantly higher than that earned by most women. Basic earnings were highest among entrepreneurs and lowest among women in governmental organizations. In terms of countries, it was highest in Singapore and lowest in the Philippines and Indonesia.

In short, the women managers in Southeast Asia were young, well-educated, marry men better qualified than themselves, and earn comfortable incomes. They paid the price of marrying late or not marrying at all (assuming most had wanted to marry as indicated in the survey).

## **THAI WOMEN: EDUCATION AND LABOUR MARKET PARTICIPATION**

### **Women's Education Patterns in Thailand**

As indicated in the previous chapter, the most important step in advancing the education of women was taken in 1921 with the introduction of the Elementary Education Act that made primary education compulsory, irrespective of gender. The Thai educational system in the 1990s consists of a year in kindergarten, six years of primary, three years of lower secondary levels followed by three years of upper secondary levels. Almost half of the children who finish primary school do not go on to secondary education, but this varies greatly depending on location. For example, the transition ratio from primary to lower secondary school is nearly 100 per cent in Bangkok, and over 80 per cent in the five provinces of the Bangkok Metropolitan Region, while in the majority of other provinces the ratio is 30 per cent or below.

The United Nations Development Report indicated that in 1990, among persons aged 15 to 19, literacy was 99 per cent, while adult literacy was 93 per cent. As for the male-female gap, in 1990 female literacy was 96 per cent of the male rate (United Nations, Human Development Report, 1993). Enrollment at the primary level in 1990 was more or less equal for boys and girls. The number of girls being somewhat higher than the number of boys at the upper-secondary level is attributed to the fact that girls remain in the general education stream at the upper-secondary level while a significant number of boys leave to enter vocational and technical schools.

Higher education is restricted to a relatively small segment of the population. Less than 10 per cent of secondary students continue on to higher education programs. The statistics show that overall women outnumber men, with women constituting 54 per cent and men 46 per cent of all graduates (Xuto et al, 1994). When comparing graduates from public and private universities, it becomes clear that a larger number of women than men complete a bachelors degree. Equal numbers of women and men obtain masters degrees but less women earn doctoral degrees as compared to men. (See Table 3.1)

**Table 3.1**

**Number of graduates from public and private universities by type of degree and gender, 1991.**

	<b>Women (%)</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Total</b>
Certificate	919 (26)	2,566 (74)	3,485
Diploma/associate	436 (35)	795 (65)	1,231
Bachelor degree	37,594 (57)	28,893 (43)	66,487
Graduate diploma	395 (43)	533 (57)	928
Masters degree	2,567 (50)	2, 597 (50)	5,164
Doctoral degree	32 (47)	36 (53)	68
<b>Total</b>	<b>41,943 (54)</b>	<b>35,420 (46)</b>	<b>77,363</b>

***Source:*** Ministry of University Affairs.

The majority of all men and women were enrolled for their first degree in the fields of social science, however from figures available from public universities' enrollment, twice as many women as men graduate from this stream. Women are concentrated in business administration, economics which includes finance and accounting, and home



economics (See Table 3.2) Besides social sciences, other popular programs for women include education, medicine and health-related sciences, and humanities. Not surprisingly, women make up almost 100 per cent of students enrolled in nursing colleges. The fields of engineering, law, medicine and agriculture/forestry continue to be traditional male fields of study. The statistics for vocational and skills development programs offered by government departments and private institutes show that women make up almost two-thirds of the participants, however they select courses such as home economics, handicrafts, typing, hair-dressing, and drama. Men are concentrated in industrial skills, crafts and agricultural training. With the economic boom of the late 1980s and early 1990s, Thailand is facing a severe shortage of engineering and science graduates and labour forecasts suggests that there may be growing shortages of bachelor-level graduates in all scientific and technical fields over the next decade (TDRI, 1988).

**Table 3.2**

**Number of graduates in selected social science fields at Public Universities by gender in 1991**

	Women (%)	Men (%)	Total
Psychology	158 (79)	42 (21)	200
Economics	1,041 (57)	791 (43)	1,832
Business	9,041 (70)	3,939 (30)	12,980
Political science	1,634 (42)	2,223 (58)	3,857
Home economics	518 (98)	120 (2)	530
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,392 (64)</b>	<b>7,007 (36)</b>	<b>19,399</b>

*Source:* Ministry of University Affairs. Cited in Nisa Xuto et al., “Baseline study on Participation of Thai Women in HRD”, Thai - Canadian HRD Project, 1993. (draft)

Overall, Thai women tend to remain in fields that are traditionally identified with women, although these are not the ones that would be seen as such in the West. This reinforces women's gender role of providing support and service to leaders, managers and executives, most of whom are male

### **Women And Work In The Thai Economy**

The majority of studies confirm that women are most likely to engage in waged work if the following factors apply. First, if they reside in urban areas; second, the higher, and the more general rather than technical/vocational their education qualifications; third, the lower their family responsibilities (in terms of number of young children present in the household); fourth, whether they live in a male or female-headed household; and lastly, the lower other income and family wealth is (such as husband's earnings and house ownership) (Psacharopoulos and Tzannatos, 1992). This section provides a general background of Thai women in the labour force and the trends and patterns of their participation over the past two decades.

Since most of the Asian economies have been growing rapidly, it is hardly surprising that the age-participation profiles for women, as Horton (1996) has pointed out, have been changing over time. Major changes that can be observed in Thai society, as a result of industrialization during the past two decades are:

**Declining Fertility Rates:** Thailand's total fertility rate (the number of children born to every married couple) dropped from 6.3 in 1965 to 2.4 in 1989 (Labour Force Survey, 1992).

**Delayed marriage:** The average marriage age has increased for both rural and urban women from 21.4 (rural) and 24.3 (urban) to 23.0 and 25.5 respectively (Limanonda, 1991)



High levels of migration from rural areas to Bangkok: This influx has caused the city's population to increase from 3 million in 1971 to 8 million in 1985; over 60 per cent of this migration stream were women (United Nations Report, 1987).

Increased employment for women: Labour force participation for women especially in the service sector increased from 58 per cent in 1972 to 67 per cent in 1987 (Labor Force Survey, 1987).

### **Factors that account for high female economic activity in Thailand**

At the beginning of Thailand's planned development, the participation of women in the economy was already high. In 1960, women comprised 48.4 per cent of the total labour force and in 1983, female labour force growth overtook male labour force growth (National Statistical Office, Report of Labour Force Survey, 1960-1983, Bangkok). This rate has not decreased over the past three decades and in the publication of the ILO's Economically Active Population, 1950-2025, Thailand, after China and Sweden, has the world's highest participation rates for women aged between 16-65 years, which stands at 74.8 per cent (ILO Economically Active Population, 1950-2025, Table 2).

Six factors contribute to the high level of participation. The main determining factor is the rural-urban division. Thailand is an agricultural economy with a predominance of family farms with rice as the main crop. There has always been a higher participation rate for women in rural than urban areas, since a subsistence economy such as Thailand, makes heavy use of female labour. Agriculture and related activities are mostly household based and women's working activities on farms are more compatible with childcare and household responsibilities.



Second, with rapid industrialization and the increased possibility of obtaining a job in urban areas, a large number of female migrants who are young and single move to the city where there is a burgeoning demand for female labour in local and multinational production and in the service sectors. While the majority migrate for work-related reasons, it is highly likely that female migrants view urban employment as a means of helping their families. While both male and female migrants do send money home, Thai parents often expect daughters to be more obedient and less likely to spend money on themselves. In their paper on export factory workers in Southeast Asia, Foo and Lim (1989:219) also note that while 'the ideology of parent repayment is not peculiar to women only..... they appear to adhere to it more strongly than men'. Thus while poverty and lack of employment certainly contribute to migration for both men and women, it is women who feel a greater sense of obligation to continue in employment thus ensuring the survival of kin who stay behind.

Third, family enterprises also dominate in the industrial/service sector in Thailand. In such commercial enterprises including grocery stores, restaurants and manufacturing, most family members are expected to take part. A family consists not only of wife and children but may also include parents, older and younger siblings, cousins and so on. Women who are family workers play a variety of roles from those who help in production or domestic work, to those who take part in management. For example, there are a number of women family workers who undertake 'substitution' work in the sense they can take their husbands' place when necessary, handle the greater part of the activities involved in the business, direct wage workers and handle marketing.

While these women are not officially recognized as entrepreneurs because this position has been taken over or transferred to the husband, such women can really be called disguised entrepreneurs (Pongsapich et al, 1985).

Fourth, many Thai families are extended families. The rearing of children is undertaken by older female relatives thus leaving the wife with adequate time to carry out economic activities. Migrant women workers also depend on support that comes from relatives in rural home areas, usually in the form of childcare by grandparents. This tends to arise when migrant women in the city work outside the home but are unable to pay childminders and/or do not have neighbours or friends willing to help out. Alternatively when women have several children, fostering one or more 'upcountry' with grandparents, leaves them with the choice to continue their work without interruption, as well as easing economic pressure.

Fifth, socio-cultural and religious factors also play a part in facilitating women's participation. Psachaopoulos and Tzannatos (1992) have argued that while male participation is relatively independent of demographic, social, cultural and other factors, female participation bears a rather clear relationship to some non-economic factors. Pointing to religion as a discriminating variable that affects the quantity and quality of female work, the authors observe that Muslim and Roman Catholic countries have the lowest female participation rates, whereas countries with no major religion (mostly socialist countries) have the highest female participation rates. For instance, in Malaysia, women of the Islamic religion are expected to work according to religion and social practice (secluded from men and subordinate to male authority), leading



many employers to believe that women are not as good employees as men (Lie and Lund, 1994). Similarly, in Indonesia, women are not able to perform work 'dangerous to their morality' (Hutchings, 1996:66).

In contrast, both social and religious attitudes in Thailand have always favoured working women. Unlike other Southeast Asian nations (i.e., Malaysia, Indonesia) in which husbands often tell their wives to resign 'fearing that they may develop too much autonomy' (Hutchings, 1996:67) and where powerful norms of female seclusion are enforced, Thai women do not have to avoid work which brings them in contact with men. Neither is it considered a 'loss of face' for a Thai husband to have a wife who goes out to earn a living.

Lastly, as mentioned in the previous chapter, historical precedent plays a crucial role in the widespread economic involvement of Thai women. In the Ratnakosin period, seven hundred years ago, men were expected to do services for their superiors and serving the King was considered the most honourable activity whereas trading was considered a lowly activity befitting women and aliens. This is a major reason why even today, Thai women dominate trading activities, particularly at the retail level.

### **Legal and institutional aspects of women's employment**

The Interior Ministry is empowered to regulate the employment of labour in general, and much of the current legislation dates back to April 1972. One chapter of the legislation deals with women's employment and contains clauses which relate to the



types of work and the timings during which women can be employed. For example, unmarried women under eighteen years of age, are not allowed to work in nightclubs, dance halls, dance studios, or places where liquor is sold. The second half of the legislation deals with wages and welfare benefits. For example, in terms of maternity leave, a woman who has been employed for not less than 180 days is entitled to leave with pay for a period of ninety days. In terms of pay discrimination, Section 26 of Chapter 4 of the legislation states that 'where the work is of the same nature, quality and volume, the fixing of wages, overtime, pay, and holiday work pay, shall be equal regardless of the sex of the employee'. Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that although women's employment in Thailand should be protected by the Constitution preventing discrimination, this is not entrenched in legislation and this has led to countless cases of discrimination against women in respect to public office and function, in access to education, in civil rights with reference to marriage, and in employment opportunities, as compared with men. Moreover, the absence of affirmative action legislation and the lack of institutions strong enough to push women's issues, constrains women's activities and hinders their employment opportunities.

## **THE DEVELOPING ECONOMY AND THAI WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT:**

During the past three decades, the Thai economy has changed substantially. After experiencing an average GDP growth rate of more than 10 per cent per year, between 1987 and 1991, Thailand is poised to become the fifth member of the so-called newly industrializing countries (NICs) of Asia presently comprising Korea, Taiwan, Hong

Kong, and Singapore (Krongkaew, 1995). Currently therefore, Thailand is undergoing a transition facing many developing countries where the structure of the labour force is changing.

The size of the labour force in 1980 was 22.5 million, a figure which increased to 27.7 million in 1989. Agriculture and mining were the largest sectors in terms of labour, accounting for 62 per cent, while manufacturing, commerce and services accounted for 38 per cent. In 1992, the size of the labour force was 29.61 million, 16.9 million of which were male and 12.71 million were female, with agriculture continuing to remain the largest sector (See Table 3.3).

Agriculture is also the most important sector in Thailand in terms of absorption of female labor. In 1980, the highest proportion of female labor (74 per cent) was employed in agriculture, followed by 18 per cent and 8 per cent in service and industry respectively. In 1989, approximately 7.1 million Thai females worked in agriculture and 4.1 million worked in another fifteen labour-intensive industries, accounting for 95 per cent of total female employment.

An unprecedented demand for women workers was created as a result of the Thai government's policy shift towards encouraging labour-intensive, export-oriented manufacturing. During this process of economic development, the role of agriculture as a contribution to GDP declined from 40 per cent in 1960, to 16 per cent in 1989. Although there is a more or less even distribution of women and men in manufacturing,

the services and commerce, men outnumber women in construction, transportation, infrastructure, healthcare and mining.

**Table 3.3**

**Employed Population by Industry - Whole Country (1992)**

*( in million/percentage )*

Industry	Female (%)	Male (%)	Total (%)
Agriculture, Forestry Hunting and Fishing	6.49 (22.23)	8.42 (28.84)	14.91 (51.07)
Manufacturing	2.06 (7.05)	2.20 (7.53)	4.26 (14.58)
Commerce	1.90 (6.51)	1.69 (5.79)	3.59 (12.30)
Service	1.78 (6.10)	1.69 (5.79)	3.47 (11.89)
Others	0.48 (1.64)	2.9 (8.53)	3.38 (10.17)
Total (%)	12.71 (43.53)	16.80 (56.47)	29.61 (100)

**Source:** Gender and Development Research Institute, derived from the Labour Force Survey: (February 1992), National Statistical Office.

Analysis of the 1992 Labor Force Survey indicates that in Bangkok, 25 per cent of all working women were in manufacturing, 23.2 per cent in sales, 15 per cent in services and 18.6 per cent in clerical occupations. In 1980, the industries which were female labor-intensive consisted of agriculture, textiles, footwear, garments, paper handicrafts, wholesale and retail trade and personal services. In 1989, the scope of female labour-intensive industries expanded to include non-metallic mining, precious stones, food and tobacco manufacturing, wood and rubber, handicrafts and entertainment services.

The difference in female labour participation rates among urban and rural women is a reflection not only of the nature of the work performed by them but also of their



marital status. In urban areas, most economic activity takes place outside the household, making it difficult for women who have no household help to participate. It is interesting to note that in 1980, married women were the group with the highest labor force participation rate but by 1989, this position was taken by single and divorced women. This rise could be explained in two ways. One explanation is that economic hardship forced single and divorced women to seek employment. Alternatively, it could be that these women possess sufficient earning ability to be able to choose to be single or may wish to end a marriage contract by divorce once disagreement occurs within the marriage. Thai women's increased independence through participation in the paid workforce has been singled out as the primary reason for the increase in the number of female-headed households (Thomson and Bhongsvej, 1995). Of all the household heads in 1990, women headed 5 per cent of households in urban areas and 15 per cent of households in rural areas (National Statistical Office, 1990). There is a general tendency in the literature to see women-headed households as victims of widowhood or desertion by spouses, and to emphasize the problems they are likely to encounter (Republic of the Philippines and UNICEF, 1990). Less consideration has been given to the possibility that they might result from self-determination on the part of women and may also, within the context of supportive kinship networks and growing female job opportunities, be advantageous structures.

### **Thai Women in Industry**

As noted in an earlier section, the emphasis placed by the Thai government on export-manufacturing as a process by which Thailand can attain the status of a newly

industrializing country (NIC) has resulted in the high absorption of Thai women as workers in labour-intensive, export-manufacturing sub-sectors. One similarity between companies, whether they be locally-owned, joint-ventures or branch plants of larger multinational enterprises, is a preference for young, single workers. (Elson and Pearson, 1981:71). Younger workers are thought to be more productive, to have better health (particularly eyesight) and to be more malleable in terms of adhering to company ethos. Younger workers are also more likely to have completed elementary education. Single people are thought to be more productive, mainly on account of an assumed lack of household responsibilities (Eviota, 1992:120).

Chant et al (1995) in studying gender segmentation in electronics and garment firms in the Macron Export Processing Zone (MEPZ) in the Philippines, found that women predominate in all departments except maintenance. They tended to be heavily concentrated in assembly (83 per cent in garments, 94 per cent in electronics), post-assembly or finishing (90 per cent and 63 per cent) and administration (78 per cent and 53 per cent). On the other hand, maintenance departments, janitors, cleaners and engineers are exclusively male because men are thought to be 'stronger' and more adept at heavy and/or technical jobs. Pearson (1986) has provided a useful discussion about the ways in which different groups of women are favoured in different situations, although she concludes that, in general, export factories in Southeast Asia, especially electronics firms, desire young, single (and fairly well-educated) women. It is interesting to note that employers (mostly male) hold gender stereotypical assumptions and these were used to justify women's concentration in certain jobs. For instance in Chant's (1995) study cited above, for spinning and punching jobs which involved the



operation of machinery, only men were thought to possess the relevant capabilities. Whereas for certain jobs such as sewing, which also required the use of machinery, managers reported selecting women because 'women have good hands' or 'women's anatomy and biology allows them to sit in one place longer than men', or that sewing is more 'natural' for women owing to their social conditioning at home. (Chant et al, 1995:141).

Besides manual work, women were also given preference as administrative employees, the reasons given being that women were perceived as being 'reliable', 'efficient', 'good with figures' and having sound organizational ability. (Chant et al, 1995:142). Despite these positive assumptions however, the authors found that while all companies employed women in some managerial positions (mainly in accounts and personnel) this was rarely in proportion to the number of women employed in the firm overall, nor did their recruitment in personnel positions have a positive effect on the occupational distribution of other women workers. Men tended to remain in senior decision-making positions and key supervisory positions, to the extent that in predominantly female sections, nearly half the heads are male. Moreover, men were promoted faster than women (Chant et al, 1995).

The case of women workers in Philippine factories is cited here because a similarly high degree of gender-stereotyping pervades factory recruitment in Thailand. The so-called female attributes cited by employers in the Philippines, reflect the range of assumptions about women also held by many Thai employers. For example, the 'nimble fingers' syndrome (Elson and Pearson, 1981) whereby women are thought to be more



dexterous than men and capable of performing manual assembly and finishing work at high speeds is also the major reason why women are much in demand in labour-intensive, export-manufacturing sectors in Thailand (Xuto et al, 1994). Another set of gender biases relates to perceptions about female psychology, foremost among which is the notion that women have a patient disposition and a capacity for high levels of concentration. They are also seen to be passive and docile, meaning that they are less likely to be vocal about their rights or join trade unions and labour congresses (Piriyarangsarn and Limskul, 1994). A final set of gender biases is linked to women's commitment to reproductive work within their families as they move through the life-cycle. Writers have often stressed that employers prefer young women to young men because the former are likely to leave work voluntarily on marriage or childbirth, as a result they will be less committed to labour organizations and/or less likely to demand redundancy payments. Specifying that female workers should be single is also advantageous to the employer because marriage and childbirth are regarded as incurring additional expenses (cost of maternity and finding replacements) and also because motherhood is seen as incompatible with concentration on the job and working overtime. This is compatible with Anker and Hein's (1985) findings that Third World urban employers usually prefer men because of the anticipated costs involved in employing women, for example, pregnancy, and higher levels of absenteeism and turnover associated with family responsibility. Soonthornthada (1991) in surveying several large and medium factories around Bangkok and its periphery found that very few establishments provide facilities for married women. In fact, most dormitories for employees were arranged for single women, with no in-plant or child-care services provided. Whilst in the past, it was possible for women workers to hire domestics to

care for their children, the recent expansion of employment in industrial sectors has led to the supply of domestics becoming scarce as well as expensive, leaving the women workers with no resort except to rely on family members or sometimes, even friends.

### **Women's working hours and earnings**

In 1980, average hours worked per week were 56.7 for men and 55.1 for women. In 1989, the average hours worked were shorter, at 54.3 and 51.5 for men and women respectively. Average working hours also vary slightly with age. For men, average working hours increase with age and peak at ages 35-55. For women, average working hours have two peaks, at ages 15-24 and between 35-44. The slight decline in average working hours for women at ages 25-34 corresponds to the time when most women have children. Women in urban areas who participate in the labour market are mostly full-time, permanent workers. Those who are not available to work full-time have been forced to leave the labour market. The situation is different in rural areas where part-time employment is widely available accounting for higher participation rates. (Phananiramai, 1996).

In 1989, on average, female employees earned 20 per cent less than their male counterparts. The earnings gap between male and female employees varies by age group, but the gap tends to increase with age. For example, female employees aged 15-24 earned only 8 per cent less than males, the gap was 15 per cent for the age group 45-54, and for the age group 55 and over, women earned less than half of what men did. One might suspect that the gap in earnings reflects differences in education,



however the data shows that this is not so. In 1989, on average, female employees with primary education earned 30 per cent less than males with the same level of education (Phaninaramai, 1996). The earnings gap between male and female workers also varies by location and industry. In urban areas, the wage gap was narrowest in the public utility industry but in the rural areas, it was narrowest in the construction industry. Phaninaramai (1996) has argued that the reason for sex differences in pay in Thailand is because women are under-represented in high paying industries and receive lower wages, even after certain selected characteristics such as age and educational attainment are controlled for.

## **THAI WOMEN IN MANAGERIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE POSTS**

Only Thai males were sent abroad in the reign of King Rama V (1868-1910) to equip them for careers in government service. Since women were not given similar opportunities and were unprepared and unqualified for government service, they had recourse to careers in commerce. Kirsch (1975) in writing on changes that occurred in Thai society since the nineteenth century observed that Thai men were generally not attracted to economically-oriented entrepreneurial or commercial ventures. The general hierarchical element in Buddhism which ranked various kinds of activities; religious highest, political next, economic lowest, served to discourage Thai men from taking up economic roles. Hence, those who did get involved in such activities were disproportionately women. Skinner supports this observation in his presentation of the occupational stratification in Bangkok as of 1952, wherein he recorded that 'as many as three times more women than men held such positions as the following; large

business owners and managers, small business owners and managers, market sellers in stalls, hawkers and petty market sellers, and market gardeners'. (Skinner, 1957:301)

Early accounts attributed the dominant role of women in business to the 'laziness' or 'business inefficiency' of Thai men. However Skinner's statistics revealed evidence about the occupation specialization of men in that 'more than ten times as many men as women were high-ranking government officials, high-status professionals, members of a high office staff or high-status industrial and business clerks. The Thai patterns of occupational specialization follows a sexual division of labor, women specializing in "economic type" activities, men specializing in "bureaucratic or political type" activities' (Skinner 1957:302).

Given the strong role played by Thai women in the commercial arena one would assume that they would be in a better position to succeed within corporate managerial careers. However, within the occupational group of administrative, executive and managerial personnel, the proportion of males to females was 4 times higher in 1980 (2.0 versus 0.5 per cent), 3 times higher in 1989 (2.2 versus .8 per cent) and continued to remain 3 times higher in 1992 (5.4 versus 1.68 per cent) (Phaninaramai, 1996). The National Statistical Office, Labour Force Survey for 1992 provides data on the employed labour force categorized by gender and occupation. The category entitled "administrative, executive and managerial workers" is summarized in the following table:



**Table 3.4    Administative, executive and managerial workers by gender, 1992.**

*(in thousands and percentage)*

<b>Municipal Area</b>	<b>Whole Kingdom</b>	<b>Bangkok</b>	<b>Upcountry</b>
Males	284.1(76.3%)	197.7(75.1%)	86.2(79%)
Females	88.2(23.7%)	65.2(24.9%)	22.9(21%)
Total	372.3	262.9	109.1

Despite the low figures for women managers in general, the number of women in administrative positions in government enterprises shows a marked increase over the last two decades. Polnikorn (1991) attributes this increase to the following factors; first, the higher educational levels attained by females in the administrative, executive and managerial group, relative to their male counterparts, second, the rapid expansion in the economy which has created many managerial job opportunities, and finally, a decline in male administrators who are moving out of government enterprises to higher-paying private firms.

Polnikorn (1991) on observing the tiny number of managerial jobs in Thailand as compared with those in the US, argued that management careers are a recent phenomenon and have resulted from the boom in urbanization and industrialization in Thailand during the past two decades. Her argument that corporate managerial jobs were created only in the recent past is substantiated by Suehiro (1992), who in writing on the historical development of Thailand's capitalism observed that the majority of present-day Thai businesses were established only in the 1970s with rapid expansion in

the size of these businesses transpiring during the next two decades. Psacharopoulos and Tzannatos (1992;93) argue that 'the growth of occupations' is a more important determinant of women's relative position in the labour market than the improvement of 'women's occupational distribution'. They further explain that where there exists an excess supply of labour, as in the case of Latin America, women are utilized in the customary occupations unless (or until) shortages arise which enable them to enter 'male' sectors. In Thailand, the wide differential in financial benefits between the two sectors has caused a 'brain drain' of male administrators from the public to the private sector. This, combined with the fact that more women are taking and passing civil service exams explains women's increasing representation in the public sector in the levels of administrative, executive and managerial personnel.

One of the objectives of the current study is to compare the employment situation of women managers in the public and private sectors in terms of personnel policies as well as to explore whether they face different constraints in their upward mobility. In this section, an overview of the number of women employed in various public and private sector organizations as well as their representation at different levels of management, is presented.

### **Women in the Civil Service:**

It is generally acknowledged that the Thai political system is characterized as a bureaucratic polity and that many significant elements of the policy making, decision making and implementation are in the hands of the civil service bureaucracy in the various ministries, government agencies and state enterprises.



The National Commission on Women's Affairs, Office of the Prime Minister of Thailand, has prepared a report entitled "The Status of Women and Platform for Action 1994". In this report, the Office of the Civil Service Commission has outlined the distribution of civil servants by ministry and gender. (See Table 3.5). Civil Service positions are classified into eleven grades (Cs) and eight occupational groups. The grade levels are as follows:

Grade 11	Permanent Secretaries
Grade 10	Director-Generals and Provincial Governors
Grade 9	Deputy Director-Generals and Vice Governors
Grade 7-8	Division Directors
Grade 5-6	Senior Professionals and Section Chiefs
Grade 3-5	Professional staff
Grade 1-2	Clerks and technicians

Women comprised about 52 per cent of all officials working in the public sector in 1990 but their participation at different levels in the civil service started to decrease from level C-4 upwards. On the other hand, the share of positions held by men increased steadily from level C-4 where they held 51 per cent of the positions, to C-11 where they held all of the positions. In effect, women occupy the lower rungs of the decision-making hierarchy in the government civil service. Although their overall participation is greater than men's, 98 per cent of all women are in positions below level C-7. The majority of women are clustered at level C-3.

**Table 3.5**

**Number of civil servants by level and gender, 1990 (fiscal year)**

<b>Level</b>	<b>Women</b>		<b>Men</b>		<b>Total in level</b>
	<b>Number of persons</b>	<b>Percentage in level</b>	<b>Number of persons</b>	<b>Percentage in level</b>	
<b>11</b>			25	100	25
<b>10</b>	18	6	274	94	292
<b>9</b>	45	11	367	89	412
<b>8</b>	492	20	1,928	80	2,420
<b>7</b>	2,484	28	6,433	72	8,917
<b>6</b>	8,488	37	14,573	63	23,061
<b>5</b>	24,781	45	30,889	55	55,670
<b>4</b>	30,024	49	30,784	51	60,753
<b>3</b>	56,098	60	37,784	40	93,882
<b>2</b>	22,441	59	15,486	41	37,927
<b>1</b>	12,797	62	7,776	38	20,573
<b>Grand total</b>	157,668	52	146,264	48	303,932

**Source:** Office of the Civil Service Commission. Cited in Nisa Xuto, Dhipavadee Meksawan, Maria Correia, "Baseline study on Participation of Thai Women in HRD", Thai-Canadian HRD Project, 1993. (draft)



In 1993, women were somewhat evenly distributed among the ministries, with the highest participation being in the Ministry of Public Health (75 per cent) and the lowest, in the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (28 per cent). Women also had a high participation in the Ministry of University Affairs (74 per cent), Ministry of Education (68 per cent), Independent Public Agencies (60 per cent) and the Ministry of Justice and Commerce (58 per cent). Men had a higher representation rate in the Ministry of Agriculture (72 per cent), the Ministry of Interior (67 per cent) and the Ministry of Transportation (61 per cent). In terms of occupational groups in the civil service, women outnumbered men in medicine, nursing and public health (73 per cent), social science, welfare, corrections and community development (66 per cent) fiscal, economic, trade and industry (61 per cent) and general administration, statistics, legal and foreign service (55 per cent). Men dominated in the fields of engineering technician (96 per cent) followed by agriculture, fishery, animal science and cooperatives, (86 per cent) and communications and public information (63 per cent).

The educational qualifications of women civil servants show an interesting pattern when compared to men in 1990. Women outnumbered men somewhat in the higher vocational certificate and equivalent (56 per cent) and are more or less equal in high school, lower vocational certificate and bachelor degree level and equivalent qualifications. In contrast, at the higher degree levels, master and doctoral degrees, men outnumbered women significantly, by 60 and 77 per cent, respectively. In summary, it can be safely said that although women have been participating as much as men in the civil service labour force, they do not have an equitable share in terms of

higher-level positions and responsibility and authority, nor in the attainment of higher education.

Top level management in the civil service is ranked at C-9 to C-11, with C-11 being the highest level bureaucrat, usually the Permanent Secretary of the various ministries. Aggregated statistics from the Labour Force Surveys of 1985-1991 give a general indication about Thai women in administrative, executive and managerial occupations throughout the Thai economy. As Table 3.6 shows, although the number of women in administrative and managerial positions is increasing fairly rapidly, their share still remains at 19 to 20 per cent of the total number of such positions. In 1993, at these three levels there were 493 officials, of which only 46 were women (9 per cent). Of these 46 women, 30 were clustered at C-9 which amounted to 13 per cent of all 230 officials at this level. There were a mere 15 women out of 240 officials at level C-10 (6 per cent). In 1992, the first woman was promoted to grade 11 (C11) in the Office of the Auditor General, which is an independent agency under the Office of the Prime Minister. Although the number of women working in the Thai civil service outranks that of men, the number of high-level woman officials does not meet the 30 per cent target as recommended in the 1985 Country Report.

**Table 3.6****Distribution of senior executive civil servants by ministry and sex, 1993**

Ministry	Number of Persons			Total
	Level 9	Level 10	Level 11	
1. Agriculture Women Men	31	15	1	47
2. Commerce Women Men	3 13	2 8	1	5 22
3. Education Women Men	3 33	1 15	1	4 49
4. Finance Women Men	5 14	10	1	5 25
5. Foreign Affairs Women Men	2 15	2 10	1	4 26
6. Industry Women Men	2 9	9	1	2 19
7. Interior Women Men	4 26	2 87	1	6 114
8. Justice Women Men	5	5	1	11
9. Prime Minister's Office Women Men	4 13	6 33	10	10 56
10. Public Health Women Men	3 13	10	1	3 24
11. Science and Technology Women Men	3 11	1 9	1	4 21
12. Transportation Women Men	1 17	1 10	1	2 28
13. University Affairs Women Men		2	1	3
14. Auditor General Women Men		2	1	1 2
<b>Total women</b>	30	15	1	46
<b>Total men</b>	200	225	22	447
<b>Grand total</b>	230	240	23	303,932

**Source:** Office of the Civil Service Commission. .



## **Women in Politics**

Thai women have had the political rights of voting and competing in elections since 1932, the longest in Asia. However, until recently, women participated very little in politics at the national, local and provincial levels. At the provincial and local levels, the presence of women had been limited because of legal prohibitions. For example, the Local Administration Act of 1914 which was in effect until 1982, stated that a candidate for the office of village chief must be a male householder. Holding the post of village chief is a prerequisite for eligibility to be elected to the post of sub-district chief. The revision of the act in 1982, opened the way for women to contest elections. By 1992, women held about 5 per cent of local political-administrative positions, such as mayor, sub-district chief and village chief. The figure for women sub-district chiefs rose from 8 in 1985 to 72 in 1992 and for village chiefs from 163 in 1985 to 856, by 1992.

At the national level, women's participation is increasing. In 1986, women comprised about 3 per cent of successful candidates and by 1992, women represented 4 per cent of all elected Members of Parliament. From 1980 to 1992, women's participation in the appointed Senate increased from 3 to 9, but they still represented only 3 per cent of all Senators. Up until 1992, there were no women in the Council of Ministers. (See Table 3.7)

**Table 3.7**

**Distribution of women and men in various types of political positions, 1993 -1994**

<b>Position and type of political body</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Total</b>
Council of Ministers		49	49
Member of Parliament * (Lower House)	16	344	360
Member of Senate ** (Upper House)	9	261	270
Mayor	9	123	132
Councillor	19	269	288
Member of Municipal Council	127	1,985	2,112
Member of Provincial Council	100	1,946	2,046
Sub-district Chief	78	6,538	6,616
Village Chief	789	55,626	56,415
Sub-district Assistant Chief	219	13,075	13,294
Member of Sub-district Council Committee	238	61,603	61,841
Member of Village Committee	20,214	319,163	339,377

- Sources:**
1. \* The Secretariat of the House of Representatives, Thailand, 1994
  2. \*\* The Secretariat of the State, Thailand, 1994
  3. Local Administration Department , 1993

### **Women in the Private Sector:**

In the private sector, there are more women than men with low education working in services and commerce (57 per cent for both sectors) but there were more men with low education in the agricultural sector (58 per cent) and in construction (88 per cent). There is more or less an equal proportion of women and men in manufacturing with lower education. While there are more women with elementary education in agriculture (59 per cent), service (65 per cent) and commerce (72 per cent), in the higher education category, men outnumber women in all sectors.

Xuto et al (1994) in surveying women as white collar workers in eleven firms showed that women constituted 45 per cent of total employees, but that there were twice as many men as women in management positions in these firms. Similarly, a survey conducted by Direct Marketing Service Company Limited in 1993 on the distribution of executives in 1676 private firms showed that women represented merely 31 per cent of the 9,853 executives identified in the survey. The same study also attempted to measure job opportunities for executives by examining vacancy advertisements in three leading daily newspapers over a period of one month. During this period, 8,277 positions were advertised and these were subsequently classified into three employment levels as follows:

Executive/Superintendent : consisting of positions such as project manager, administrative and financial manager, requiring 5-7 years experience. Approximately 7 per cent of all positions advertised were at this level.



Chief of Division : consisting of assistant manager, finance officers, comptrollers, engineers, scientists, and executive secretaries, requiring 3-5 years experience. This level constituted 19 per cent of the positions advertised.

Operational Staff: consisting of sales personnel, accounting clerks, secretaries, messengers, drivers and general office workers, requiring 1-3 years experience. This category encompassed 74 per cent of jobs advertised.

Overall, 73 per cent of the companies indicated no gender preference, while 17 per cent indicated a preference for men and 10 per cent, a preference for women. Gender preferences prevailed across all three levels. At the operations level, women were preferred for secretarial work, public relations, accounting and office assistants, while men were preferred for positions in production, sales, maintenance and delivery work. At the executive and management levels, men were preferred over women by an 8:1 ratio (Xuto et al, 1994).

## SUMMARY

Women's social and economic status is closely related to their workforce participation which is itself affected by the level of development of an economy. In Thailand, women's participation, employment and earnings have undergone the same rapid changes as the rest of the economy over the last two decades. Historical precedent, the strong dominance of family enterprises in which both genders actively participate, and the support offered by members of extended family systems, are among the factors which account for Thai women's high levels of workforce participation. In its patterns of women's life cycle participation and earnings relative to men, Thailand shares some

characteristics with another Asian country, the Philippines, in that women who work tend to remain in the workforce throughout their working life.

However, institutions have not necessarily changed to accommodate women's increased importance in the labour force. In terms of types of jobs and relative earnings, Thai women are indeed discriminated against. They earn less than men, which cannot be explained by shorter hours or educational qualifications, are concentrated in relatively few industries and occupations, and despite advancing into professional and government jobs, find promotions to the higher echelons difficult. It is important to point out that not all women experience the same degree of discrimination. The small number of women who have had opportunities to develop their potential and skills through higher education, those who have inherited business enterprises or who have access to resources through family connections, suffer lesser discrimination than the majority of women, especially those in rural areas, who have little access to education or better-paying jobs.

Thai women's status and their participation in the labour force is affected by various laws, government institutions and politics, and although the legal framework contains a number of provisions regarding discrimination, enforcement of these is still lax. Marriage bars and gender-segregated job advertising are still common. Deeply ingrained cultural attitudes and other structural constraints also exist which affect Thai women's lives and work.

In order to realistically evaluate the status of Thai women, as elaborated in the present chapter, it is necessary to locate broader conceptual findings on the status of women in other countries and cultures, their entry into higher-level jobs, the management of their careers, and more importantly, their roles in the household. It is with this view that Western literature (European and American) on women's roles and status in the workforce is explored in the ensuing chapter.



## **CHAPTER IV**

### **A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT**

Thus far, the study has explored the historic origins of the Thai people and the impact of culture on Thai managerial practices. It has also examined the role of women in Thai society and their participation in the workforce. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the absence of a body of literature on Thai women managers as well as those in other Asian countries, has necessitated the use of Western literature, relating to women managers throughout the study. The use of this literature is based on the assumption that women managers in Thailand are sufficiently similar in their socio-demographic features to their counterparts in the West for such a literature to provide a useful starting point. The research findings will suggest which aspects of the literature need to be challenged or modified to fit the specific cultural environment of Thailand. There is sufficient evidence from existing studies to suggest that this will be a fruitful approach.

#### **Women Managers: Similarities across countries**

Even in countries that would normally be thought to be very different, i.e., Japan versus the US, women managers share certain common features. Researchers conducting cross-cultural studies of women managers for example, find evidence that suggests their position is similar in terms of demographic characteristics i.e., in many countries, women managers share middle-class origins and many have fathers who had worked in the professions (White 1989; Hennig and Jardim, 1976; Cartwright, 1972). Furthermore, women managers world-wide also share a number of barriers that are

similar. These barriers are structural (e.g. legal restrictions, cultural sanctions, social norms, stereotypes, discrimination, historical policies, corporate obstacles, educational barriers) and psychological (e.g., difficulties coping with role expectations and conflict, lack of political skills, disinterest in pursuing management careers) (Adler and Izraeli, 1988; Chan, 1988). Some examples of the similarities in barriers in different countries are given below

In most countries, if not all, management is considered to be a masculine career field and is heavily dominated by men, especially at the senior levels. Even in countries (e.g. Indonesia,) where women are more highly educated than men, women are underrepresented in managerial positions (Crockett, 1988). Women managers are typically located in the less-powerful, lower-paid, and lower positions than their male counterparts (Chan, 1988; Hearn and Parkin, 1988). Across countries, they experience credibility problems, blocked mobility, discrimination and stereotypes. These stereotypes are found to be pervasive across countries such as, Canada (Andrew et al, 1994); Japan (Steinhoff et al, 1994); Singapore (Chan et al, 1994); Indonesia (Wright et al, 1994), and the United States (Fagenson et al, 1994). They include the beliefs that successful managers have male attributes, that women do not have the commitment or the motivation to manage, that married women or mothers are unsuitable for jobs requiring foreign travel or long hours, that men are more emotionally stable than women and are intellectually superior, and that others, especially men, will not want to work for a woman (Adler et al, 1994). Women managers also experience similar isolation and loneliness in management positions, especially at higher levels. They share similar feelings of having limited authority and poor career prospects (Chan, 1988).



Work-family conflicts exists for women managers in most countries (Andrew et al, 1988). In fact, given the time-intensive nature of managerial positions in most countries where women are managers, they are less likely to be married or parents. Overall, in most countries women managers in the public sector fare better than they do in the private sector, perhaps due to better compliance with affirmative action regulations (Adler and Izraeli, 1988).

### **Women Managers : Differences across countries**

Despite similarities, there are also differences in the proportion of women managers and their prospects for entry and promotion into management. These variations are mostly due to the differences in fundamental assumptions about women's role in management. Firms in some countries, e.g. the United States, employ an **equity** approach which assumes that women are identical, as professionals, to men, and therefore capable of contributing in ways similar to those of men. Women managers are expected to assimilate into the corporate culture, think, dress and act like men, and effectiveness is measured against male norms. In contrast, firms in other countries, e.g. Sweden and France and Japan, use a **complementary** approach based on the assumption of difference. Women managers are expected to be different from male managers, and organizations attempt to set up conditions that enable women and men to make unique, equally important contributions (Adler and Izraeli, 1988). For example, women are said to employ a more supportive leadership style as compared to men, and firms in countries using the complementary approach, recognize and value this difference.



Differences among women managers internationally also exist due to varying cultural traditions and social norms, levels and forms of economic development, social policies, access to education, and organizational processes (Adler and Izraeli, 1988). *Cultural traditions* and even religion may dictate women's participation rates in management. For example, the social norm in Japan indicates that for women to achieve senior management positions, they must be the appropriate age and unmarried (Steinhoff and Tanaka, 1988). In other countries, women born to elite classes (Fiji, Indonesia) are ascribed leadership positions (Renshaw, 1988; Crockett, 1988). In nations where the roles of wife and mother are central, e.g. Israel, women are discouraged from becoming managers (Izraeli, 1988). *Economic developments* affect women's access and opportunities in management positions. For example, Singapore's rapid economic growth in the 1980s led to an increase in women's participation rates in management. However, women were still concentrated in traditional functions, i.e., personnel, administration, public relations, consumer affairs and in lower and middle management positions (Chan, 1988). *Social policies*, i.e., legislation, allocation of resources, that differ in countries, have also impacted on women's participation in management. Whilst some countries, such as the United States, have policies, i.e., Affirmative Action, that actively promote women's participation into management, others, such as Singapore, South Africa, have government policies that discourage women's labour force participation (Chan, 1988; Erwee, 1988). Women's *access to education* differs across countries, which affects their subsequent selection and advancement in management positions. For example, in the United States, Canada and Israel, women are often recruited directly from universities for management positions, whereas in the

United Kingdom, a university degree is less important (Russell, 1994). *Organizational processes* differ for women in various countries. In Japan, women are excluded from geographic transfers, which are often critical to their advancement to senior-level management positions (Tanaka and Steinhoff, 1988).

## **WOMEN MANAGERS: WHERE ARE THEY IN MANAGEMENT, AND WHY?**

There are two parts to this section. The first part deals with the question: Where are women managers to be found? For this, statistical data on women in the workplace and in management, and their representation in the different occupational sectors is provided. The second part deals with the question: What sort of woman becomes a manager? To answer this question, explanations for women's representation in management are offered, e.g., the role of early socialization experiences and their part in determining the career orientation of women.

### **Participation of Women in the Labour Force**

Over the past 50 years, the increasing numbers of women in the workforce and their growing interest in careers has been a major development in most countries. For instance, since the 1960s, women have been entering the workforce in significantly increasing numbers throughout Western Europe, Australasia and the US (Davidson, 1987). In the UK, by 1984, women made up 41 per cent of the workforce, and by 1991, they accounted for over 11 million employees and their share of the employed workforce had risen to 44 per cent (Naylor and Purdie, 1992). Throughout the rest of Western Europe, women comprise between a quarter and a third of the workforce,



with Denmark having the highest percentage of any country, 45 per cent of the total labour force is female (Eurostat, 1988). A similar trend is evident in the US where in 1950, only 30 per cent of American women were in the workforce, a figure that rose to 45 per cent in the mid 1980s. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics (1986) had predicted that by 1995, 59.9 million American women would be in the labour force bringing the participation rate to 59 per cent.

Further analysis of this data indicates not only that the workforce composition is moving towards a gender balance, but also that there is also a significant change in the composition of those entering the workforce. For example, in the US, by 1988, the fastest-growing segment of the workforce was married women with children, up from 39.1 per cent in 1978 to 52.5 per cent in 1988 (Matthis, 1990). The trend is no different in the UK where in 1991, 70 per cent of married females were in the workforce and over 41 per cent of women with a child were in employment, compared to a mere 24 per cent in 1983 (Social Trends, 1991).

## **THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT**

While the participation of women in the workforce in general is relatively easy to estimate, obtaining accurate data on women managers is difficult because of the variety of definitions used for the term 'manager'. In this study, the EEOC definition of management is used. Management is defined as 'an occupation requiring administrative personnel who set broad policies, exercise overall responsibility for the execution of these policies and direct individual department or special phases of a firm's operations



(Office of Management and Budget, EEO Standard Form 100, Employer Information Report, EEO-1).

Using this definition it can be said that between 1985 and 1991, the percentage of women managers increased in 39 of the 41 countries that report comparative labour statistics. Statistics reported by the ILO indicate that the percentage of women holding managerial positions is at least 40 per cent in Australia, the USA, and Canada (ILO, 1993). In the UK, the New Earnings Survey for 1975 showed women to represent 11 per cent of all employees in management, professional and supporting administrative occupations. The 1991 data for these categories shows a total of 38 per cent women. While the figures are not comparable, the sharp increase nonetheless suggests that there has been a substantial growth in the proportion of women managers and those doing related work.

The greater proportion of women managers in some countries rather than others has been attributed to changed societal values regarding the role of women, legislation prohibiting gender discrimination in employment, and affirmative action programmes (White, De Sanctis and Crino, 1990). Powell (1988) cites the change in cultural norms concerning the proper role of women in society coupled with the impetus of federal policies and legislation as the two major factors contributing to the increase in the number of women managers in the US. Whereas Boyd et al (1990) attribute the same increase to an increase of women employees in general, and to the occupational and market shifts towards a white-collar, information-based service economy.

Nevertheless, despite the importance of occupational pursuit in the plans and lives of women, the nature of their participation in management continues to differ greatly from that of men. For instance, in no country do women constitute close to half of all corporate managers. In the USA, UK and Australia, the percentage of senior women managers is very small, amounting to between 1 and 2 per cent (Adler et al, 1994). An estimate by the National Economic Development Office (NEDO) put the percentage of women holding senior and middle management positions in Britain at only 4 per cent and those holding senior executive positions at a mere 1 to 2 per cent (Hirsh and Jackson, 1989). According to a study conducted by the UCLA Anderson Graduate School and Korn/Ferry International in 1990, only 5 per cent of top executives in 1,000 of the largest corporations in the USA were held by women and minorities (US Department of Labor, 1991).

### **Occupational Distribution of Women in Management**

Throughout the European Community there is job segregation based on gender. Over half of all working women are employed in the service sector which includes trade, retail, education, health care and clerical duties. In comparison, men are employed in a wider range of occupations and industries (New Earnings Survey, 1992). In the light of this, the occupational distribution of women managers largely in staff and support functions is not surprising. The situation is not much different in the US, where despite stronger anti-discrimination legislation, women continue to be concentrated in a small number of traditionally female jobs and professions, especially clerical work, retail sales, the jobs of waitress and beautician, and housekeeping services. Hence women



managers in the US are most heavily concentrated in the medical/health, personnel/labour relations, and education/administration areas (Fagenson et al, 1994).

Conversely, there are certain job categories and organizations in which women managers are hard to locate. A British Institute of Management Survey (1984) which covered the careers of 1882 male and female managers showed that women were found less in manufacturing than men and were employed as managers in mainly service organizations, such as government, education, training and professional services. Women managers were also highly likely to be found in office administration and personnel and in organizations where there was a higher than average number of other women. Similarly, in the US, Olson, Frieze and Good (1985) in a study of MBAs from the University of Pittsburg found that among 12 job area categories, the most striking difference was the almost complete absence of women from production and engineering positions. They found that men were also more likely to be general managers.

### **A Profile Of Women In Management**

Several studies in the US and UK have shown that female managers are only a third to a half as likely as male managers to be married, and those who are married, less likely to have children (Larwood et al, 1977, 1979; Davidson and Cooper, 1987; Powell, 1988). In a large-scale survey of 696 females and 185 males at supervisory, junior, middle and senior management levels in a wide cross-section of different industries in the UK, Davidson and Cooper (1984) found that women were more likely to be



slightly older, and less likely to be married than were men (56.5 per cent and 74.6 per cent respectively). Women were more likely to be childless, and if they had children, they had fewer in number, twice as many women were divorced or separated (15.12 per cent versus 8.1 per cent). Whilst women had lower educational qualifications overall, there was little difference between the numbers of women and men with first degrees and postgraduate qualifications, although women were more likely to have professional qualifications. In another large-scale study conducted by Alban-Metcalf and Nicholson (1984) in the UK, with a sample comprising 371 female and 993 male middle managers and 41 female and 477 male senior managers, women were generally younger, less likely to be married (60.9 per cent versus 93.3 per cent), almost four times more likely to be divorced (11.9 per cent versus 2.7 per cent), and more likely to be childless. Half of the married women had no children; those who did have children tended to have fewer than their male counterparts. Of the female managers, 90 per cent had partners in full-time employment, whereas only a quarter of the men in the sample were in a similar position. The findings also showed that women were found more in service organizations and in specialist functions.

Similar trends are evident when one examines biographical data on women managers in the US. In a 1990 survey of 40 women in middle management, about half were married compared to 95 per cent of their male counterparts (Freeman, 1990). Moore and Rickel (1980) received responses to a questionnaire from 303 women managers in the US; 156 in nursing and 147 in business and industry. Those women who had achieved upper-level positions were more likely than women in lower level positions to marry later, have fewer children and return to work soon after the birth of a child. Baum in

*Business Week* (1987:80) identified '50 Women to Watch', who were those among the highest ranked female executives in the country. Nearly 50 per cent were unmarried, and of those who were married, almost one-third had no children. In fact, none of the 25 top women managers interviewed in the classic study by Hennig and Jardim (1976) were married.

Perhaps the most comprehensive profile of the Western woman manager emerges from a study of corporate women in America's largest *Fortune* 1000 companies conducted by Heidrick and Struggles in 1986. The typical corporate woman executive was a 44-year old, white Protestant woman, working in a \$2 billion or more service organization, headquartered in the eastern portion of the US. Her annual income was \$ 116,810 (base salary and bonus). Having worked for 3 employers in her career, she had been with her present firm for less than 10 years. She devoted 55 hours a week to her work and spent less than 25 per cent of her time on business travel. She was married, but childless and spent less than 10 hours a week on home-making tasks. She had been employed continuously throughout her career without interruptions for family or home-making responsibilities. She was more likely to have a background in finance or general management and was promoted to her present position from a job within the firm. She had one or more mentors (counselors) and sponsors (supporters), had a college degree and was likely to have earned an advanced degree.

Recent profiles of managerial women are surprisingly similar to those of the women of two generations earlier. In fact, the female manager who was expected to be representative of the 1980s bears a close resemblance to the woman manager of the



1960s. A majority of the newer generation of corporate women, similar to the women of Hennig and Jardin's (1968) sample, also prefer to remain childless. And of those who have children, most take primary responsibility for their children's care. Where a partner does share childcare and domestic tasks, the share is never more than half. Two aspects of the profile remain disturbing. First women's acceptance of what they give up in order to achieve success. Second, whatever women achieve in their work lives is often achieved by cutting back on family time, and since few fathers give more time to families than mothers, this usually means that parental time is cut. Women's willingness to do this may be symptomatic of the new work culture, the idea that 'we are what our jobs are'.

## **EXPLANATIONS FOR WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN MANAGEMENT**

What makes a woman a manager? Why are some women orientated towards managerial careers, whilst others are not? Why are some women more successful as managers than others? The answers to these questions could lie in a woman's early socialization. Childhood socialization is an important influencing factor in occupational behaviour and has been the topic of much research. Parental occupation (social class), sibling position, identification with father or mother, and parental encouragement of achievement, are some of the factors particularly influential in development and these are explored in the following paragraphs.



## **Parental Occupation : Social Class**

The concept of socio-economic status (SES) has been variously defined and measured; indices of SES have included the occupational or educational level of the primary breadwinner (usually the father/husband) and family income. Despite definitional variation however, SES is one of the most consistent predictors of the occupational level achieved by males; higher family SES is related to higher achieved occupational levels in sons, whereas sons of lower class backgrounds achieve lower occupational levels (Brown, 1970). As pointed out by Goodale and Hall (1976) sons are likely to 'inherit' their fathers' occupational levels. In contrast, male parent's/father's SES does not seem to be a consistent predictor of women's career development. Studies which have reported the social background of women managers suggest that they have predominantly middle-class origins (Hennig and Jardim, 1978; White, 1989). Conflicting results have been found in studies of female entrepreneurs. The limited data on British female entrepreneurs indicate that they have different social origins. In a small-scale study, White (1989) found that the majority had a working-class background (as measured by the father's occupation). The failure of SES to be as predictive of women's careers as it is of men's may be explained by differential expectations of the sexes in society. Although high SES families are likely to encourage and facilitate achievement-related behaviour in their sons, the extent to which they do so in their daughters will depend on their attitudes towards working women and possibly the absence of sons in the family.

### **The Influence of Siblings:**

An explanation for the association between birth order and success may be derived from findings in developmental psychology. The number of siblings that a child has, his/her place among the children (birth order), and relationships with brothers and sisters constitute important aspects of the child's learning situation in the home. The child may learn patterns of loyalty, helpfulness, protection, or of conflict, domination and competition, which may later reflect on other social relationships.

Studies of women who have succeeded in male-dominated occupations have indicated that most were first-born or only children. For instance, in a study of women managers enrolled in the MBA programme at Harvard Business School, Hennig and Hackman (1964) found almost twenty out of twenty five were first-born or only children. Later studies of both American and British female entrepreneurs, have shown a large percentage to be first-born (Hisrich and Brush, 1987; Watkins and Watkins, 1983).

Mussen et al (1979) suggest that first-born children are likely to be treated differently from those born later. Oldest children do not initially have to share their parents and so they tend to receive a lot of parental attention and affection. Alternatively, parents may treat their first-born more like an adult than they do their later-born children; they may expect more of the child, who may be pushed harder to accomplish. These early experiences of responsibility and of pressure to achieve may encourage first-born children to test their abilities and gain experiences which enhance their feelings of competence and self-confidence. First-born children may be given the responsibility of



looking after younger siblings and often become a source of identification and imitation for them.

### **Identification with father and/or mother**

Most theories of vocational development incorporate constructs of identity. Imitation of same-sex models, particularly one's father and/or mother, is recognized as central to the socialization process (Hennig and Hackman, 1964). If parents act out and believe in the traditional sex-role stereotypes, they are likely to reward boys for being leaders, encouraging competitiveness, autonomy, aggressiveness, and independence and to discourage girls from similar behaviour. On the other hand, parents who hold more egalitarian views to child-rearing, expect girls as well as boys to be independent, to excel in mathematics and science, to be competitive in sports and be leaders. Moreover, as more mothers work outside the home, it is likely that more daughters have their mothers as female role models and that imitation of professional and managerial mothers will facilitate similar career success in daughters, just as imitation of professional and managerial fathers facilitates similar career success in sons (Kelly and Boutilier, 1988). For example, 26 per cent of the sample of successful women interviewed by White et al (1992) felt that their mothers had been most influential in their development. Their mothers were often described as having very strong characters and driving energy which their daughters had found to be a positive influence. It is almost self-evident that parents who do not encourage achievement and career ambition for their daughter will be less likely to provide them with the financial, emotional, and other intellectual support required to obtain the educational and other



human capital training needed to succeed. Thus, a professional mother can help serve not only as a role model but also to ensure that there is adequate supply of such support to her daughter.

Differences in orientation towards the family and the adult responsibility that women and men are expected to have within the family, also strongly influence career opportunities in the workplace (Fuchs, 1988). Men are assumed to need and/or deserve more leisure time and greater freedom from housework and other domestic responsibilities. One consequence of the differential emphasis on family responsibilities is that, even in egalitarian family environments, girls more often than boys opt for occupations more compatible with childcare responsibilities, such as being an elementary rather than a university teacher, or being a nurse instead of a doctor (Fogarthy et al, 1971).

To achieve one needs to be ambitious; to be ambitious means one must be motivated. Studies of factors affecting career choices of females in the labour force (Waddel, 1983) indicate that entrepreneurs and managers both “scored higher than did secretaries in achieving motivation, locus of control, internality, and sex role ‘masculinity’”. However, entrepreneurs scored slightly higher than managers, and this can be explained by the fact that they had more parental models; both mothers and fathers, who had engaged in entrepreneurship than did either the managers or secretaries. This suggests that “very early experience may be significant in determining important career behaviours that are seen later in life” (Osipow, 1987, p. 274). Whereas parental variables appear to be importantly related to women’s career

development, a major limitation of the research is the assumption that both parents are present when a daughter is growing up. Dramatic increases in the number of single-parent families across all racial/ethnic groups (Ferraro, 1984) suggest that research based on nuclear family assumptions, are now increasingly irrelevant to an understanding of the career development of many women and men. Many single parents are women, and in most cases, are employed outside the home. Because such mothers provide a model of integration of work and family roles (Almquist et al, 1971), they can provide a less stereotyped view of feminine and masculine roles than housewives and encourage a career orientation rather than a home-making orientation among their daughters.

## **Education**

The nature and level of obtained education are importantly related to subsequent career achievements and to adult socio-economic status and lifestyle. Appropriate educational preparation, especially through graduate or professional education is a major gateway to careers in many professions. Thus, the decision an individual makes concerning his or her education, both in terms of the level and the broad area of study, are among those that have the most impact on his/her career. Walsh and Osipow (1983) have stated that the educational level is one of the most powerful predictors of career achievement in both men and women. One of the most striking and consistent relationships is that the higher a woman's education, the more likely she is to be working outside the home, regardless of her parental or marital status (Vetter, 1980). In addition to its relationship to career orientation and achievements, higher education



in women is also related to a greater tendency to remain single, to higher rates of marital disruption (i.e., divorce) and to lower fertility rates (Houseknecht and Spanier, 1980). Higher education in women is also related to more liberal attitudes towards women's roles by women and to such characteristics such as autonomy and the desire for achievement (Betz and Fitzgerald, 1987). Thus educational level is related to a number of other major variables which positively influence women's career development.

One reason for the increasing number of women managers may also result from the increasing enrollment of women in business schools. In 1991, more than 45 per cent of students studying for social administration and business degrees in British universities were women, compared to 10 per cent in 1973 (Social Trends, 1991). In the USA, in 1988, over 40 per cent of all graduating lawyers were female and nearly 50 per cent of all graduating accountants and one-third of all MBA students were women, which represents an increase of more than 300 per cent in the last decade (Matthis, 1990). Three explanations are possible for this marked increase. First, more women are investing in higher education in business because organizations have opened jobs in sectors and departments to women that were previously staffed by men. Second, more universities and schools have introduced the MBA (Master of Business Administration) programmes and other forms of management studies, and some companies have developed in-house MBA programmes for their employees in conjunction with universities. Lastly, universities are encouraging women to identify with new subject areas and are also making it easier for them to enrol, i.e., in summer schools and evening programmes.



## **WOMEN'S WORK VERSUS HOME RESPONSIBILITIES**

Regardless of income or marital status, employed women who are married must deal with home and family in ways that employed married men do not. The assumption that a woman is still primarily responsible for maintenance of the home and family, as well as her career, leads to a condition Friedan (1981) has termed the 'superwoman syndrome', in the sense that women attempting to excel at both the traditional female sex roles and the male role of paid labourer, are encountering a task that only a 'superwoman' can completely fulfil.

Empirical studies demonstrate the burden this condition can impose on women. Hochschild's (1989) study of couples and housework shows this imbalance of roles requires women to put in a 'second shift' as housekeeper, consumer, and caregiver. The author further argued that even women who have egalitarian arrangements at home still put in more energy, time, and labour during this second shift than their spouses (Hochschild, 1989). Hochschild's analysis however sharp and amusing, places the blame on stubborn men who will not change and on women who allow men to have their way. It does not investigate the cultural and organization structure which makes change for men so difficult.

Several reasons why women managers may choose to stay single are identified in the literature. Devanna (1987) reported that 67 per cent of a sample of women executives said they had given up marriage, family plans and social relationships just to be

successful. It is not only success however that had caused these women to forego marriage and parenthood, it is also that they strongly believed that they could not handle the pressures of both work and family. Spending more time on childcare and home duties as compared to their husbands, forces women to compromise on their leisure time thereby increasing their levels of stress. For instance, Skow (1989) reports that working women in the US spend 15 fewer hours at leisure each week than their husbands, and when faced with scheduling conflicts, women tend to reduce leisure time before reducing time spent on child care. A similar study in the UK indicated that 73 per cent of women do nearly all the housework, and that men, in dual-career households have an average of 6 hours more spare time at weekends than their wives (Henwood et al, 1987).

Husbands' attitudes and behaviour influence the way in which women balance career and family. Taylor and Spencer (1988) argue that not only do women seek their husbands' approval in selecting managerial posts but that their career involvement can be reduced in response to their husbands' career needs. In addition, wives who achieve higher occupational and salary status than their husbands tend to experience increased marital instability and divorce (Fendrich, 1984). Some husbands disapprove of the hours worked, if not the earnings, and others may totally disapprove of their wives' employment, per se. Therefore, when a wife earns less and devotes more time to the family, there is less chance of marital instability.

It can be argued that the status quo of conflict for career women with families continues because women themselves seem to accept and even welcome a certain level



of inequality in family responsibility. While data suggests that most women would like their husbands to contribute more to housework and childcare (Pleck, 1985), it is not clear whether women expect their husbands to perform half of such chores. Thus, being a working woman and a wife would appear to be much more demanding than being a working man and a husband, with a direct relationship between total hours required to fulfil all roles and the amount of family conflict and personal stress (Pleck and Staines, 1985).

### **The Effects of Family on Women's Career Development**

Questions about the applicability and veracity of models pertaining to career development, that historically have concentrated solely on men have been raised by a number of authors (Astin, 1984; Gallos, 1989; Gilligan, 1982; Larwood and Gutek, 1987; Rossi, 1980) who propose that women's lives present unique challenges and stresses not accounted for in most of the career development models. Accordingly, understanding women's careers requires an entirely new approach. Women's distinctive developmental voice and needs point to fundamentally different career perspectives, and these differences are further expanded when cultural expectations, shifting social norms, employment opportunities, marital practices, childbirth and rearing, and organizational/institutional practices are added to the picture (Astin, 1984; Larwood and Gutek, 1987; Giele, 1980; Gallos, 1989; Hardesty and Jacobs, 1986).

If the issues identified among the theories of women's career development serve as any guide, then two themes become clear; one, women's career and life development



involve a complex panorama of choices and constraints; and two, issues of balance, connectedness, and interdependence *in addition to* issues of achievement at work permeate women's lives. Evidence suggests that women are likely to be concerned with both their careers and personal relationships at all times, but they place different degrees of emphasis on career and relationships in their actions and decisions at different times. For instance, at any point in time, women may place primary emphasis on career and achievements at work, or place primary emphasis on family and personal relationships outside work, or try to strike some kind of balance between the two (Goldsmith, 1989). Thus the placing of primary emphasis on career and the placing of primary emphasis on relationships, may be considered as opposite ends of the same continuum.

Recognizing this, some researchers have argued that organizational practices regarding alternative work schedules should take women's emphasis on career versus relationship with others into account. Sinclair et al (1995) for instance, believe that organizations can maximize the opportunities for women managers if they understand their diversity in terms of needs and aspirations and customize their human resource management policies to these differentiated groups or segments. The authors have therefore called for a marketing-oriented approach (segmenting women managers according to their needs) because the evidence from their study on Australian organizations implementing affirmative action policies, showed that these firms were encountering significant differences in what factors women valued in the workplace and what they were prepared to work hard for.

Schwartz (1989) too has urged organizations to take a marketing-orientated approach by segmenting their female employees into two groups according to their emphasis on career versus relationships; 'career-primary' women who emphasize career, and 'career-and-family' women, who seek a balance between the two. She recommended that organizations which wished to maintain highly qualified women in the latter category should offer them alternative work schedules and family supports, to help achieve success in relationships with others, in exchange for reduced opportunities for career advancement. Schwartz's (1989) article has been criticized for reinforcing gender stratification at work. Her proposal that only women who single-mindedly devote themselves to their careers and who can act like men (in other words, by remaining single or at least childless) can enter the upper echelons of management, creates for women a series of optionless options. The article also does not question the assumption that it should be primarily the province and responsibility of women to care for children.

## **BARRIERS ENCOUNTERED BY WOMEN MANAGERS**

Morrison et al (1987) indicated in their book, **Breaking the Glass Ceiling: Can Women Reach the Top of America's Largest Corporations?** that women are moving into entry level positions so easily that they may be convinced that a 'glass ceiling' does not exist, but in time, they notice that their male peers have advanced at a more rapid pace. The 'glass ceiling' is described by Morrison et al (1990:200) as 'a barrier so subtle that it is transparent, yet so strong it prevents women and minorities from moving up the management hierarchy'. Three broad perspectives are offered by



researchers to explain why this ceiling has remained impenetrable and kept most women from senior levels of organizations. The first, the **gender-centred** approach builds on ways in which women are different from men and concludes that these deficiencies in women are responsible for their lack of career progress. The second, entitled the **organization structure approach** builds on the notion of bias and discrimination of the majority towards the minority. It suggests that managerial women are held back as a result of bias which stem from male-dominated hierarchical interactions taking place daily between men and women in organizations. The third, the **organizational processes** perspective, emphasizes systematic discrimination as revealed in organization policies and practices which affect the treatment of women and which limit their advancement. The three perspectives, which present a multi-dimensional foci for understanding the barriers faced by women managers are explained below.

## **THE GENDER-CENTRED PERSPECTIVE**

We have seen earlier in the chapter that early socialization patterns can provide explanations for perceived or actual differences between men and women. We have also seen from the sociological studies cited in the literature, that women managers who engaged in considerably higher levels of household labour than men, will be employed in positions that are less demanding in that they require fewer hours of work per week, as well as less training, less education and less commitment. Other more psychologically based theories focus on the individual characteristics of women as the major determinants of career progression. According to the 'gender-centred'



perspective women's behaviour and limited representation in management is attributed to factors that are unique to women, i.e., women possess characteristics that are in conflict with the demands of their managerial role and are antithetical to their being promoted to the upper levels of their organizations (Fagenson, 1986; Harragan, 1977; Horner, 1972; O'Leary, 1974, Riger and Galligan, 1980; Schein, 1973, 1975). The dominant themes covered under this perspectives emphasize 'personality differences', 'leadership/management styles', 'motivation' and 'fear of success', and these will be discussed in the next few paragraphs.

### **Personality Differences**

'Management' is often not viewed as an occupation which anyone who possesses the right skills can perform. Rather, it is viewed as an occupation in which the assumptions about who is suitable to be a manager, including which social and personal characteristics are required, is based on societal assumptions about women and men. For instance, the fact that organizations perceive women as incapable of exercising authority may come from the societal belief that men are masters and women should behave subserviently towards them.

Schein (1973, 1975) was one of the first researchers to show how the social construction of management is one in which managerial competence is intrinsically linked to qualities attaching to men. She interviewed 300 males who were associated with the insurance business and asked them to complete an index of 92 descriptive items and rate each on a 5-point scale as to whether they were typically characteristic

of 'men in general' or 'women in general' and/or successful middle managers. Eighty six of the traits were identified as important for effective management and of these, 60 were perceived as characteristic of 'men in general', while only 8 were judged to be characteristic of 'women in general'. The successful manager was perceived as one who possessed characteristics, attitudes, behaviours, and temperament more commonly ascribed to men than to women. These results can be attributed to the fact that men are seen as rational, decisive, assertive, self-sufficient, tough-minded, venturesome, and in control. Women are seen as being too emotional and sentimental, unable to act under pressure, less competent, less independent, less objective and less logical than men (Basil, 1972; Broverman et al, 1972; Schein, 1973, 1975). Schein concluded that successful middle managers are perceived to possess the characteristics, attitudes and temperaments more commonly ascribed to men in general than to women in general. In other words: **'Think manager, Think male.'**

It is not just male managers who hold stereotypical views of female managers. Research studies demonstrate that both male and female subordinates see having a female boss as 'problematic'. O'Leary (1987a) obtained evidence that male bosses were characterized as more competent, powerful, tough and respecting than women bosses by a sample of undergraduate students and secretarial trainees. This could be the result of the fact that women managers have fewer contacts with their subordinates than do male managers (Rosen et al, 1981). Some of the reasons given by men for not wanting to work for women managers include their perceptions that they are (1) lacking in confidence, (2) are lacking in organizational politics, (3) come across too strong, (4) have limited clout, and (5) are only tokens. Subordinates can provide a



strong power base for managers, as well as valuable information and feedback, and without their support, female managers often do not receive the right amount of recognition and support they need to advance in the organization.

Yet other studies have been done to investigate whether men and women actually differ in certain personality traits that are required for effective management. Are there major differences and do men possess managerial characteristics more often than do women? Studies have been conducted using students, non-managerial males and females as well as practicing male and female managers as respondents. Such studies have reported mixed findings regarding gender differences with some reporting differences (Bartol and Butterfield, 1976; Rice et al, 1980), and others supporting findings of no significant differences (Donnell and Hall, 1980; Butterfield and Powell, 1981; Rosen and Jerdee, 1978).

In one study where differences have been found, 884 male managers and administrators working in 66 US organizations were asked to evaluate men and women on aptitude, knowledge, skills, interest, motivations, temperaments, work habits and attitudes (Rosen and Jerdee, 1978). The findings reflected those of Schein's earlier mentioned study in that overall, women were seen as being better suited to secretarial than managerial work, and there were more negative perceptions of women than men. Men were rated higher on standing up under fire, keeping cool in emergencies, and being independent, self-sufficient, and aggressive. Women were rated higher on crying easily, being sensitive to criticism, being timid rather than forward,



being jealous, being too emotional about their jobs, and being sensitive to others' feelings.

A recent study by Rizzo and Mendez (1991) is consistent with the above findings. Male managers were perceived as being unafraid to say what they think, more knowledgeable about the organizational and political system, exerting authority diligently, being concerned about meeting the organization's needs, and rarely losing their tempers. Women managers were viewed as being pushy, too emotional if they do not get what they want, manipulative (e.g., using methods other than productivity to move up), and having difficulties overcoming basic nurturing instincts.

In contrast, **A Significant Case of No Significant Difference**, the subtitle of a 1980 study of male and female managers revealed few differences between the two at work (Donnell and Hall, 1980). Similarly, Morrison et al (1987) in their study of executive women and men in senior positions from organizations employing over 5000 people, analyzed results of instruments measuring behaviour in problem-solving, intellect and personality variables. The results indicated that women in management 'were not more impulsive, understanding, concerned with self, suspicious, or better at reducing interpersonal conflict than men in comparable positions. The female managers were found to be no less dominant, self-confident, optimistic about success, able to cope with stress, outgoing, self-disciplined, rational, intelligent, insightful, flexible, adaptable, even-tempered or able to define and attain goals than the male managers' (p.51-52).

Some studies even demonstrate that women score higher on traits that are assumed to be masculine. For instance, Shapiro and Steinberg (1982) studied the extent of personality differences between 71 female and male MBA students using the California Psychological Inventory (CPI); Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire and Rathus Assertive Inventory. They found both women and men with managerial aspirations scored very high on many of the traits that are perceived as being necessary, i.e., dominance, responsibility, achievement and self-assurance. Females scored higher on some traits that fit into the masculine stereotype, i.e., tough-mindedness and suspiciousness and males scored higher on some of the traits that fit into feminine stereotypes, i.e., humbleness, tender-mindedness, trust and imaginativeness.

Nevertheless, the results of personality tests have to be generalized with caution for two reasons. Firstly, some of the studies have been conducted using students as a sample, others have used real life managers. Results have varied depending on the sample selected. Overall, the majority of studies testing for sex differences in contrived settings have yielded differences while those conducted in field surveys, have not (Powell, 1988). Secondly, the norms of what it takes to be a successful manager has been based largely on male behaviour. The majority of studies show that women are evaluated less positively by both women and men even though the performance by both sexes is exactly the same or objectively equal (Deaux, 1979; Pheterson et al, 1971). Successful women managers, do possess the personality traits and motivation to manage and they have the same leadership characteristics as men, yet the perception still exists that women do not possess these skills which lead to biased ratings.



## **Leadership/Management Styles**

Just as personality differences between men and women have been the subject of substantial investigation, there has also been much debate about whether male and female managers differ in their management style. Numerous studies have been conducted, nevertheless few have found major differences in management style and performance between men and women (Marshall, 1984).

The behavioural studies on leadership, for example, have looked at two dimensions of leadership behaviour: structuring and supporting. Structuring behaviour is a 'concern for task and its accomplishment; typically associated with more directive management behaviours, rules, procedures and time deadlines' (Marshall, 1984:15). Supporting behaviour is a 'concern for people and the development of their capabilities and for maintaining good relationships within the work group; typically associated with more participative management' (Marshall, 1984:15).

Most studies have found that women are very similar to men but are often higher in their supporting role (Davidson and Cooper, 1983; Rosener, 1990; Vinnicombe, 1983). Two explanations can be offered for this. One, women are socialized to be more supporting and second, because women yield less power in organizations than men, they need to stress a supporting role in leading others. For instance, Davidson and Cooper's (1983) study of women managers emphasized their relationship-orientated leadership style. Their female managers reported using more frequently a



sensitive and sympathetic style as well as a cooperative approach, compared to their male counterparts.

It is precisely because women are felt to be more capable of supportive leadership than men, that certain researchers argue that women's leadership styles are more suited to the global workplace. For instance, Rosener (1990) studied prominent women leaders in diverse organizations in the US, using members of the International Women's Forum as a sample against a comparable sample of male leaders. She found that women were more likely than men to use transformational leadership, i.e., motivating others by transforming their self-interest into goals of the organization. Women were also found, more likely than men, to use power based on charisma, and personal, rather than organizational or structural power.

In the same vein, following her interviews and diary studies of women managers, Helgasen (1990) also concluded that managerial women have a unique perspective that makes them better managers than men. In particular, women have greater concern for relationships, disdain complex rules and structures, and emphasize process over product or task.

Vinnicombe (1987) conducted a study at Cranfield School of Management using Mintzberg's three major sets of managerial roles of interpersonal, informational and decisional together with the Myers-Briggs type indicator to create a range of management styles described as 'traditionalist', 'trouble shooter/negotiator', 'catalyst' and 'visionary'. Whereas, 57 per cent of the male managers in her sample tended to be

traditionalists, there was an average of only 26 per cent among females. More women were visionaries or catalysts, possessing skills required to work closely with all kinds of people.

On one hand, judging from the complexity of the environment that managers function in, it can be questioned whether the 'softer' feminine management styles are effective. Marshall (1984) questions the evidence showing that 'high consideration' is an adequate basis for leadership in women managers, *per se*. She believes that concern for people and task are actually interdependent factors and that concern for people can become significant only after attention to task has been established. Contingency theories (Fiedler, 1964) also downplay the existence of a single effective management style and instead emphasize the importance of matching the style to the situation. If female and male managers have unique competencies, it follows that some situations should favour each management style.

## **Motivation**

Early studies focused on gender differences in the relative importance of intrinsic versus extrinsic job features (Herzberg, et al 1957). Women were found to place greater importance on extrinsic values such as pay and working conditions, whereas men attached greater importance to intrinsic factors such as the opportunity to use one's abilities and overall job satisfaction (Herzberg et al, 1957). Other studies showed that women tended to place greater value on the social aspects of their work. Another study by Betz and O'Connell (1989) found that even within the same occupation, men

expressed greater concern than women with income, job security, and advancement; women, on the other hand, tended to place greater emphasis on working with people, flexible work hours, and the opportunity to use their special skills. More recent research in the UK reported that compared with men, women tended to place greater emphasis on intrinsic job features. For instance, Davidson and Cooper (1992) and Scase and Goffee (1989) inform that women managers are more likely than men to be job rather than career orientated and concerned with the intrinsic rewards of the task at hand, rather than with extrinsic benefits.

### **Fear of Success**

The notion that fear of success inhibits women's ability to achieve has been cited by proponents of the gender-centre perspective. Fear of success (Horner, 1972) is a belief that success in competitive, male-orientated activities leads to unpopularity and loss of femininity in the eyes of others. Horner (1972) argues that this threat to a woman's affiliative needs includes fear of being socially rejected, fear of losing one's friends or one's marriageability, and fear of isolation or rejection as a result of success.

Larwood et al (1978) also identified 'internal barriers' that women set up for themselves when they face conflict between their perception of a good manager and a feminine woman. It is the conflict in perception that causes confusion among women managers about what their 'appropriate role' should be. This confusion was clearly demonstrated in a survey of 150 highly successful academic and professional women conducted by Clance and Imes (1978). Although these women were highly qualified,



they considered themselves 'impostors' and lacked the internal sense of success their degrees, prizes, professional recognition and job appointments might be expected to confer. Many of the women felt that they were fooling other people and would eventually be discovered. Colwill (1984) has observed that male managers often attribute the success of women to luck, while their own success is attributed to hard work. But she further observed that there is a danger that women will apply these attributions to themselves, leaving them with very low self-esteem, which in turn would inhibit career growth. Similar findings were reported by Deaux (1979) who reported that women rated their performance less highly, tended to offer fewer, internal, personal reasons to explain success and use more, less-permanent explanations than do men.

There have been questions raised about Horner's fear of success results and the replicability of her studies. Investigators, in examining her work, have suggested that she might not have dealt with the underlying predisposition (motive) to avoid success, but instead, the anxiety, fear of failure and other negative feelings that arise from viewing performance in a deviant role (Giele, 1978). More recent commentators have argued that, taking social norms into account, women's concerns are very realistic. Tresemer (1974) therefore has preferred to label this phenomena as 'fear of role inappropriateness' rather than fear of success.

### **An assessment of the gender-centred perspective**

Research into gender-centred perspective became important as a theme in its own right because of the contradictions in conceptualization of women's role as a contributing member of society. The advantage of this perspective was that it did not automatically assume that women were identical to men. Bardwick (1980) and Gilligan (1982) argued that men and women are different in their psychological make-up and their personality and these differences influenced their work values and motivational patterns. These work value patterns can account for the relative lack of women in senior-level management.

Though the gender-centred perspective has guided critical research on women in management, it is not without its drawbacks. In terms of personality and leadership style differences, the research has been inconclusive and frequently contradictory. For instance, if organizations were changing rapidly to meet global competition and if the web-like networks of communication were put into place, then it can be assumed that women, with their higher interpersonal skills, would occupy higher positions in management. But that is clearly not the case so far. Fagenson (1990) has suggested that women's progress in management may be influenced not only by their gender difference but by the organization context, including a firm's history, industry and policies. For instance, resource dependence and institutional theories suggest that organizational variables not gender differences are determinants of the percentage of management positions filled by women (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978; Meyer and Rowan,

1991). The gender-centred perspective is therefore perceived as a narrow one which fails to recognize situational variables and the interaction between these variables.

## **THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE PERSPECTIVE**

A second perspective on women as managers argues that observed or observable differences in managerial behaviour for men and women are due to situational differences in the workplace. This perspective has been called the situation or organizational structure approach, and it argues that differences in how women manage at work may be due to features of the organization (Kanter, 1977; Riger and Galligan, 1980). According to Kanter (1977), individual positions in the organizational opportunity structure, the amount of power they exert in their jobs and the numerical distribution of women in these positions are variables that are considered critical for explaining why there are so few women at the top, compared to men.

Whilst the first perspective argued that it was gender differences that accounted for lack of opportunities in promotion, this perspective argues that is the greater opportunities provided for men rather than women to gain power, prestige and monetary rewards, and the fact that women are concentrated at lower levels that inhibits their progression. Women's occupational segregation, their token status, their exclusion from information networks and their limited access to mentoring relationships are some of the themes included in this perspective.



## **Women's occupational segregation**

Many industries have and continue to use a two-tier recruitment policy whereby women were taken on to perform relatively menial, repetitive tasks with limited developmental opportunities and are not expected to stay long. Organizations, on the other hand, take on men to provide the company's management layers and train them accordingly. Women therefore, provide support rather than competition for male organization members. Women's jobs are significantly less likely to be present on job ladders that lead to hierarchical success, in contrast to men's jobs which are less likely to lead to dead-ends and offer better opportunities. Women's consignment to lower level, low-paid jobs is consistent with Bielby and Baron's (1985) striking finding that jobs are far more segregated by sex than are occupations or industries. In their study (1986) of occupational segregation, they found that in 393 Californian organizations from the period 1959 to 1979 (20 years), the percentage of jobs that contained only women or only men was 93.4 per cent. All jobs in 232 (59 per cent) of the firms were completely sex segregated. Of the 61,000 employees covered by the study, only 8.5 per cent were employed in organizations with lower segregation scores, but even in these firms, men and women had the same job titles but were separated by physical location. In a follow-up study of 75 firms to see if job segregation had decreased over time, they found that 11 organizations had become less segregated, 7 had become more segregated and the rest of the 56 had not changed at all, over time.

Dasey (1981) provides evidence of the limited opportunities for women by citing examples from the computer industry. Women tended to congregate in data preparation and control and even after the initial training, continued to do less well than their male counterparts, who entered programming, which allowed better career opportunities. Similar research was conducted by Glenn and Tolbert (1987) in the US, to find out whether women were faring better in the computer industry, which was a relatively new field. They found that women in the computing industry were crowded into the lowest level, most repetitive, least flexible and least well-compensated jobs, such as data entry and computer equipment operation. Thirty two per cent of all women but only 3 per cent of all men, hold these jobs.

The age of the organization and the type of industry in which it operates may also influence the placement of women in management. Structural factors that increase an organization's stability and survival over time, may also generate intense interest among existing managers in maintaining the status quo (Kelly and Amburgey, 1991). In their study of gender integration, Baron et al (1991) reported that older organizations appeared to resist change more than younger ones and were significantly less willing to hire or promote women into management.

### **Women as 'tokens'**

Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1977) in her book, **Men and Women of the Corporation** examined a large company which she called Industrial Supply Corporation or Indsco. She argues that one must 'assign a large measure of responsibility for the behaviours



people engage in at work and their fate inside organizations to the structure of the work systems themselves' (p.10) The structural variable of opportunity was defined by Kanter (1977) as 'determined by such matters as promotion rates from particular jobs, ladder steps associated with a position, the range and length of career paths opening from it..... an individual's prospects relative to others of his or her age and seniority' (p.246). Power is defined 'as the capacity to mobilize resources' (p.247) and proportions as 'a simple quantitative matter of how many people there are of what relevant social types in various parts of the organization' (p.248).

Kanter's (1977) argument is that the passive, risk-averse behaviour that women display is not the result of personal characteristics but rather a response to the organizational situation in which they find themselves. Traditionally female jobs such as clerical work are low in opportunities and power, hence women placed in these jobs will display traits and behaviour that fit these jobs. Conversely, if women were placed at higher levels, they would exhibit traits that men exhibit in these positions.

In her numeric proportion argument, Kanter (1977) suggested that if women comprise less than 15 per cent of a total category in any organization, they can be labelled as 'tokens', as they would be viewed as symbols of their group rather than as individuals. Thus, the pressure that managerial women face in demonstrating their credibility could come from their disproportionately small numbers. Later studies found that women in token positions experience particular strains and pressures not felt by the dominant members of the same organizational status (Powell, 1988). Kanter (1977) further



explained that as tokens, women are subject to three perceptual tendencies; visibility, contrast and assimilation.

First, tokens, because of their rarity become more visible, i.e., their mistakes are more stringently criticized and they are remembered more for secondary factors such as dress, rather than for their achievements. In her Indsco case, Kanter found that tokens responded to visibility by employing two strategies; over-achievement and avoiding public events. Marshall (1984) labels the first strategy 'risky' because it may challenge dominant members' competence, incite retaliation and cause the tokens to be labelled 'hard' or aggressive' (p.101).

Second, contrast, or exaggeration of differences is the second perceptual tendency which puts pressure on token women. They respond to this by either remaining isolated or trying to gain acceptance by becoming similar to the dominant group. In the Indsco case, tokens were encouraged to join in negative comments about other members of their group, or allowed themselves and their category to be laughed at by the dominant group. By establishing themselves as 'exceptions to the general rule', tokens often used dominant group norms to exclude other women from membership, a pattern of behaviour which Staines et al (1974) also called the 'queen bee syndrome'

Third, assimilation, the third perceptual tendency, involves the use of stereotypes, or familiar generalizations about a person's social type. Tokens are more easily stereotyped than people found in greater proportion. Dominant members engage in assimilation, i.e., they tend to distort tokens' characteristics to fit generalized

stereotypes of this social group. In the Indsco case, four roles in which tokens became trapped were 'mother', 'pet', 'seductress' and 'iron maiden'. If the token rejected the first three and chose the last one, she was seen as 'tough, dangerous and suspicious'. In their study of UK managers, Scase and Goffee (1989) found that 39 per cent of women managers felt the need to meet the expectations of the dominant group while 26 per cent referred to pressures relating to their corporate visibility. They further found that some of the older female managers coped by adopting a non-assertive identity in order to blend more easily into the dominant male culture and hence avoid some of the stereotyping impositions.

While Kanter's work with Indsco has significantly helped in the understanding of the barriers women face, it is critical to recognize that the structural variables she identified may only apply to the type of organization she studied, i.e., a large bureaucratic one. Her argument that a 'quantum' number of women is needed to change organization culture is open to question. Also it suggests a symmetry whereby men in minority positions would be faced with the same problems which does not seem to be the case. Collins' (1983) research, for example, found a different pattern. His findings suggest that 'as more and more women come into a company, overt resistance drops. However, as women approach a critical mass (35 per cent of all management jobs), men become scared and threatened by the women and block their efforts to compete for top jobs' (p.3).



## **Informal Networks**

Various studies show that women are less powerful because they are excluded from informal male networks (Kanter, 1977; Richbell, 1976; Marshall, 1984; Davidson and Cooper, 1983). Schein (1979) studied social organization and the importance of the informal networks as sources of guidance and information during the first six months of organizational membership. Informal channels are critical for transmitting information required for decision making. Richbell (1976) and Kanter (1977) offer sex-specific explanations for women's exclusion. One, since many of the informal networks' norms and conventions have been developed in all-male settings, e.g., golf courses, other sports, and after-work drinks, men find it difficult and often embarrassing to include women in these activities. Secondly, married male managers who 'mix' informally with female managers may find that they have to cope with jealousy and suspicion on the part of their wives. A varied explanation is offered by Marshall (1984) who argues that women and men differ in their perception of formal and informal organization. While men tend to distinguish between the two, believing that both offered different functional benefits, women had a more positive view of the formal side and did not assign much importance to the informal side.

Josefowitz (1980) in her book **Paths to Power** discussed a 'clonal effect', that is, the tendency of people, groups and organizations to replicate themselves. Loden (1985) while reporting that the standard senior manager is a white, 50-year old male with an unemployed wife, two children and traditional values, also argues that for such a



person, his comfort zone would include people most like himself. Kanter (1977) takes the same argument further by adding the 'uncertainty' dimension. She argues that when organizations face rapidly changing environments, they face heightened risk, and in order to reduce this risk, they employ what she termed 'homosocial reproduction'. In other words male managers tend to follow a conformity strategy while selecting a management team, not tolerating diversity in any form, and because women are seen as unpredictable and incomprehensible, they would thus be by-passed for promotions.

## **Mentoring**

Just as women have limited access to information gained via informal networks, they also have limited access to mentoring relationships. Career development functions include sponsoring employees for promotions, helping them learn the ropes and prepare for advancement, providing them with psychological support, building their confidence, offering acceptance and confirmation, and providing personal counselling (Kram, 1985). Mentoring relationships, thus, have numerous benefits for individuals and organizations. More women than men who advance to senior management report having mentors. Women are more likely than men to cite 'help from above' as one of the essential factors they lacked if they do not reach senior managerial positions (Burke, 1992). Women managers may need mentors even more than men because of the discrimination and work-related obstacles they encounter. Relative to their male colleagues, women managers typically have more barriers to overcome, less access to inside information, and less relevant training or developmental experiences to help them advance into management.

Despite the importance of mentoring for women, in general, women are less likely than men to be mentors or protégés. They are less likely to be mentors because of the few women in higher-level positions in organizations. Since women are often excluded from the informal network and occupy a token status, they are less likely to be chosen as protégés. Williams (1988) reports that most men have had at least one sponsor who suggested them for promotion, but male mentors have been less likely to take on women. This is associated with the difficulties of cross-gender mentoring relationships, i.e., negative perception by peers and others, gossip, and even the potential risk of marital problems. Consequently, female protégés may not receive the same kind of support, counselling and friendship that their male colleagues experience (Burke, 1992).

### **An analysis of the Organizational Structure Perspective**

This approach has thrown light on the structural variables that impede women in their upward progress. When the findings of research emphasizing gender differences are compared with those focusing on structure, one arrives at totally different explanations for identical sorts of behaviour. For instance, Riger and Galligan (1980) argue that personal relationships with employees may be an important source of satisfaction to women. A gender-centred perspective would put this down to women's high need for affiliation. An organizational structure perspective however, would imply that the importance attributed to being liked by co-workers is the result of the job situation faced by women. Because women have little chance for promotion, their main source



of satisfaction does not come from the job itself but from the quality of their relationships with co-workers. Furthermore, it has been suggested that women are less career-orientated, less ambitious and less adept at career advancement (Harragan, 1977). The gender-centred perspective would propose that women have not learned to set goals or plan ahead for themselves. Conversely, the organizational structure perspective would explain that women are less ambitious because they have been allocated lower level jobs, without adequate challenges.

The organizational structure perspective has a number of limitations. Firstly, it has failed to consider or control for factors other than the structure, i.e., norms, history, or policies that might affect the actions, thoughts and behaviours of women. Secondly, this perspective has failed to consider the effects of broader societal forces on the organization as well as women's positions in these organizations. It has been suggested, for instance, that because women have a lower ascribed status outside the organization, they will have a lower ascribed status inside the organization as well (Schneer, 1985). Thirdly, this perspective assumes that the person and the organization are independent factors. However it can be argued that individuals are affected by organizations just as organizations are affected by the individuals in them. For instance, the fact that women are in the workforce in the service rather than the manufacturing sectors and receive less remuneration than men, can in turn, affect the attitudes, behaviours and cognitions that they develop towards the organization. In the same vein, Izraeli (1983) argues that being a token woman manager has very different consequences than being a token male manager, for whilst women are given peripheral jobs, men are often promoted up the hierarchy. To sum up, the organizational structure



perspective cannot provide a full explanation of women's limited progression, hence an examination of the third perspective, one that explores the organization processes and practices that discriminate against women, is discussed next.

## **THE ORGANIZATION PROCESSES PERSPECTIVE**

One approach to understanding the under-representation of women in management, and in particular, the paucity of women in senior management, is to scrutinize the assessment processes used by organizations. Thus the organizational processes approach explores the processes and practices which often are the vehicles of discrimination against women. As early as 1975, Jacklin and Maccoby found no sex differences in achievement motivation, risk-taking or task-persistence, and concluded that women were not psychologically handicapped for management but were hindered by discriminatory personnel practices. In the following paragraphs the key aspects of the employment relationship: promotion of women as managers, their training, and the assessment and reward of their ability and performance, will be examined.

### **Recruitment and Selection of Women as Managers**

One of the major problems related to the assessment of women in management lies in the ambiguities about the criteria that constitute managerial effectiveness. If, as stated earlier, the current body of literature on managerial behaviour and effectiveness is so completely male, and furthermore, if most senior managers who are making managerial appointments are also male, then the possibility of gender bias entering the assessment

process is not surprising. In the appointments of women, some research has shown that even where applicants fulfill suitability criteria, male managers, seem to find it difficult to believe that a woman could be the best candidate. Evidence exists that similarly qualified and experienced women receive lower evaluations than men in managerial selection situations (Rosen and Jerdee, 1974). For instance, during detailed observation of interviews, Collinson et al (1990) found that managers used different criteria to assess whether applicants were able to meet the job requirements. The same type of behaviour was described in a male applicant as 'showing initiative' and assessed as desirable, and in a woman applicant as 'pushy' and undesirable. Hence the negative stereotypes that male managers hold of women not only serve as deterrents during the selection interview, but also negatively influence the performance assessment of women currently in management jobs.

### **Promoting women as managers in masculine organizations**

A culture may be described as more 'masculine' where there is a sharper separation of functions along gender lines and where male areas are perceived as having higher status. Top management, mostly men, resort to power dynamics to restrict the number of women in senior positions. Reskin (1988) notes that those who control powerful positions in hierarchies are able to protect themselves by enforcing succession rules that secure their privileged status. Similarly, because men make the rules, select and reward others (majority men), Connell (1987) depicts the work organization as hegemonically masculine. Male associated norms in combination with numerical predominance gives masculinity and men higher status and influence.



Larwood et al (1988) see the problem of few women in senior management from the viewpoint of vested interests of decision makers. They argue that individual decision makers operate as free agents solely to their own advantage, rather than that of the organization or group. Because managerial decision makers who are mostly men, are self-interested, they are sensitive to that which will help or hinder their careers. Qualified women, who are seen as competition, are thus not promoted because such a decision would adversely affect male careers. Cockburn (1991) holds similar views when she explains that men have a fear of hiring women for scarce jobs. She explains that more women encroaching up the male hierarchy may pose a threat to a man's status and chances for promotion. Therefore men band together to exclude women from top jobs because it is in their interest to do so.

Often, the 'fear of losing customers' may be used as a rational-bias discrimination by top male managers for not promoting women (Larwood et al, 1988) Women are perceived to be better than men at the 'soft sell', at defusing irate members of the public, and at dealing with housewives and children, whereas men are seen as more credible in dealing with technical products and serving organizations which are perceived as having a more masculine image and culture. In a study of women in the publishing industry, Colgan and Tomlinson (1996) observed clear distinctions between male and female markets and clients (authors). In academic publishing for example, the researchers were told : 'male authors are more confident if their books are in male hands' (p.65), whereas children's books, cookery and health were usually commissioned by women in departments where few men were recruited. Curran (1988)



has pointed out that the common thread running through many of the 'rationalizations' of gender preferences is the recruiter's perception of differences between men and women in their facility for, and success in, the social relations which are central to the performance of specific jobs. While providing a functional explanation she further argued that 'jobs are gendered as 'female', not because they carry exogenously determined low pay and status, but because they require the exercise of certain skills and competencies which are identified in current society as female' (p.345).

Adler et al (1994) argue that 'senior executives are more able than lower-level managers to protect their spheres of influence from outsiders - including from the entrance of both women, and all but selected men' (p.15). They point out that affirmative action was intended to open doors to women at all levels of management, but in reality it opened the entry-level doors but not the executive positions to women. This has been borne out by other studies (Cox et al, 1990), which show that women are being given promotions but these are at a significantly lower hierarchical level than men and that a 'pacification by promotion' exists, suggesting that women are given promotions to create the appearance of increasing responsibility and opportunity, but that such promotions are essentially hollow. For instance a *Business Week* poll of 400 women executives at corporations with \$100 million or more in annual sales revealed that 53 per cent did not believe that they had the same chances for promotion to senior management posts as equally qualified men, and 59 per cent thought that American companies were showing no improvements in hiring and promoting women to senior management (Business Week, 1992).

## **Limited Access to Training and Developmental Opportunities**

Women managers are discriminated against in the access they are given to training and development information and opportunities. There is evidence that women are sent to less professional seminars and conferences, and are usually given less information and support (Hammer-Higgins et al, 1989). In addition, women managers receive mixed messages about their worth to the organization. They may be given developmental feedback that they are needed, yet are censored when they perform well, take risks, or threaten male superiority (Wells, 1977). The consequence is that women managers may be less prepared to move up the hierarchy.

## **Pay Differentials**

As researchers such as Acker (1990) and Rees (1992) have pointed out, there is now recognized to be a relationship between both the gender of those who do a particular job, the value put upon the skills involved and the level of pay with which those skills are rewarded. The problem of women's low earning power is due to both sex-based wage discrimination and occupational sex-segregation (Ferraro, 1984). In the US, Marshal and Paulin (1987) reported that women are paid less for virtually every occupation and that female college graduates in the US, earned a salary only slightly higher than male high school dropouts. Similarly Fraker (1984) in a study of 45 male and 45 female graduates of Columbia's MBA program between 1969 and 1972, reported that it was discrimination, not motivation or career-home conflicts that accounted for the significant pay differential between these men and women.



Evidence has also been found of bias in favouring men in discretionary pay in several British organizations. For instance, a study of merit pay in four organizations in the UK (Bevan and Thompson, 1992, p.x) concluded that 'gender bias may enter the appraisal and merit pay process at a myriad of points'. This includes managers (of both sexes) valuing different attributes in men than they do women, which in many cases reinforce gender stereotypes.

### **Performance Appraisal**

Research on gender effects in performance evaluation is of particular value because it is conducted in organizations as opposed to laboratory settings, and rather than being conducted on the often-used student population, it involves managers in real organization settings. Sex differences have been found in the way in which appraisals have been conducted. Corby (1982) highlighted these in her study of officials in the British Civil Service. While the men received more critical feedback, the women were far less likely to receive positive or constructive criticism. She interpreted the lack of feedback to women as suggesting the discomfort that male bosses felt in relation to female subordinates. She further found that women were far less likely to be promoted, and that they were more likely to be placed in narrow and restricted areas of work and in locations based on pre-conceived assumptions about their capabilities and interests. A study by Thomas (1987) of the work appraisals of female and male US Naval Officers bore out Corby's findings in that there were differences in the words used to evaluate the performance of female and male line officers, differences not only in the



content of the evaluations but also in the information imparted. She concluded that men's evaluations contributed more to career success than those of women.

In a more recent survey Palmer (1996) conducted a study on the barriers to women's careers in HM Customs and Excise Department. In interviewing 21 women Higher Executive Officers (HEOs) all of whom were eligible for promotion to the Senior Executive Officer (SEO) grade, she found that overall half of the women interviewed had their doubts about the fairness of the staff appraisal system. Criticisms of the system included queries about the ability of the reporting officer to judge the individual's merits against all the criteria; queries about the validity of the criteria themselves; debates about whether it was possible to identify 'potential' for promotion with any accuracy; and the possibility of favouritism. While women were not alone in doubting the fairness of the system, Palmer (1996) argued that 'the particular issues for women centred upon whether or not a certain type of 'macho' style and task orientation to work were viewed more favourably by their predominantly male managers' (p.134). Indeed an earlier survey of appraisal conducted in the early 1990s in the same organization, revealed that, at every grade, women received lower markings for overall performance and promotability than their male colleagues.

### **An analysis of the Organization Processes Perspective**

This perspective has demonstrated that organizations, managers and subordinates are neither objective nor gender-neutral and that gender discrimination affects the way women managers are perceived and treated. Adler et al (1994) summarized 'three

implicit and explicit processes produced and reproduced discrimination against women managers' (p.13). The first process reproducing discrimination was organizations' assignments of women and men to different categories of work. The second process was in the tendency of male managers to promote people who resembled themselves in background, lifestyle or goals, rather than on performance measurement. Lastly, hierarchies promote the pattern of dominance and subordination, most commonly between senior men and junior women, patterns which reinforce power and positional distinctions between men and women and make them appear natural. While this perspective has been useful in identifying barriers, it has still not explained, why, despite discrimination, women have been promoted to lower and middle positions and a few, to senior level positions. It also does not provide answers as to what women can do in order to assume higher level positions.

Fagenson (1990) has combined the three major approaches identified above and has described this synthesis as the 'Gender Organization System' (GOS). In it she attempts to explain how gender, the organizational context and/or the larger social and institutional systems in which women function, could interrelate to produce the limited number of women managers. In other words, rather than arguing that women's organization behaviour is an either-or situation, i.e., it is due to their gender or to the organization structure, it contends that both organization structure and gender can shape and define women's behaviour on the job.

## SUMMARY

Since the 1960s, women have been entering the workforce in significantly increasing numbers, the data indicating that for most developed countries, the workforce composition is moving towards a gender balance. Yet the gendered divisions in the labour market remain. Women continue to be concentrated in a small number of traditionally female jobs and professions, mainly in the service sectors. Women are also paid roughly three-quarters of men's hourly earnings.

Despite legislation on sex discrimination and equal opportunities in the UK, and affirmative action in the US, there is little evidence that things have improved for women. There is no doubt that between 1985 and 1991, the percentage of women managers increased in 39 of the 41 countries that report comparative labour statistics (ILO, 1993), nevertheless the authors of the same study found that no country treats its women as well as its men. Women hold between 10 to 30 per cent of the management positions in the majority of countries and merely 5 per cent of the highest positions (ILO, 1993). This has prompted some authors to suggest that for women, a 'glass ceiling' exists somewhere between upper-middle and senior management positions.

The literature in this chapter has covered three key areas, the socio-demographic characteristics of women managers, their job vs. family responsibilities, and the barriers they encounter in their upward mobility. Literature on the socio-demographic



characteristics of women managers, for example, show a number of antecedent factors in early life experiences that shape an individual's work and career pattern. Factors such as birth order, family socio-economic status, education and even relationship with parents have been known to have a formative influence on their ambition, skill development and future behaviour/leadership style. Despite many men and women sharing similar antecedents in their early life experiences, several authors have argued that women's careers or work lives cannot be understood fully without simultaneous examination of their non-work lives. Because women are constantly striving to balance their concern for work and their concern for family, several researchers believe that there is a strong need to develop new definitions and explanations for women's 'career' and 'career success'.

While explanations for perceived or actual differences between men and women vary widely, three theoretical perspectives, the gender-centred, the organizational structure, and the organizational processes, have been advanced to explain women's limited ability to assume positions of significant power in the workplace. The first builds on ways in which women are different from men, and concludes that these deficiencies in women are responsible for their lack of career progress. This approach also suggests that women may lack the education and job training necessary for managerial jobs. Almost all the evidence cited in the literature shows little or no difference in the traits, abilities, education and motivations of managerial and professional women and men. Hence, research for this explanation is limited. The second perspective, the organizational structure approach builds on notions of bias and discrimination by the majority towards the minority. Such bias or discrimination is either sanctioned by the

labour market or rewarded by organizations despite the level of job performance of women. There has been some research support for this perspective. The third perspective emphasizes structural and systematic discrimination as revealed in the organizational policies and practices which affect the treatment of women and limit their advancement. This perspective has also received empirical support. The three perspectives have offered varied interpretations of the barriers women face, however because it may not be one, but the cumulative effects from all three that hamper women's progress, Fagenson (1990) has combined the barriers found in the above three approaches into what she calls the 'gender-organization-system' or GOS. In the ensuing chapter, the research objectives and design employed for the current study are explored.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this chapter is to present the rationale for the research objectives and design employed in the current study. The research design has been informed by several areas of research. These are 1) feminist critiques of research on gender and work, 2) specific research on women and management in the West, and 3) research within Thailand on women and management. My experience as a manager in a family business and as a lecturer in general management in a private university (Assumption University) in Bangkok, has also partially influenced my selection of topic as well as the research design selected for the current study.

#### **FEMINIST CRITIQUES OF RESEARCH ON GENDER AND WORK**

Women have been excluded as subjects from most areas of research, not only of economic and business development but in history, literature, the sciences and law as well. In the early to the mid-1970s, feminist writers raised four major criticisms about sociological research. They charged that such research underrepresented women as subjects, concentrated on research topics more central to men's than to women's lives, used concepts, paradigms, methods and theories better portraying men's rather than women's lives, and used men and male experiences as norms against which all social experience was assessed (Ward and Grant, 1985). An extreme case of male bias in the literature was the actual exclusion of women from research designs, and although



researchers reported data on male-only samples and typically used the generic 'he' in their reports, they implicitly or explicitly generalized findings to all persons.

Not only were the contents of published sociological research criticized, but also the methodology employed. What emerged from the debate was the feeling that the then popular quantitative, hypothesis-based models often included variables relevant to men's experiences but omitted those central to women's (Daniels, 1975; Huber, 1973; Smith, 1974). These sociologists claimed that the assumptions as to how actors structure their everyday worlds to be found within most questionnaire or interview schedules produced a body of data, which distorted rather than reflected the actors' meanings. Further, research practices which utilized either pre-coded or pre-closed categories were often of limited use when trying to understand women's lives because there was insufficient data to pre-define them at this stage. What was most usefully required was an approach to research that maximized the ability to explore experience by listening to, recording and understanding women's own description and accounts. Hence the use of qualitative methods, which focus more on the subjective experiences and meanings of those researched, was regarded as more appropriate to the kinds of knowledge that feminists wished to make available.

Through the 1980s, women appear to have gained greater sociological visibility. Qualitative methods enabled researchers to extend knowledge of areas previously understood only from the male perspective. Maynard (1990) refers to this increase as the 'additive' approach: additive in that it adds the study of women onto existing approaches and supplements the body of knowledge about men. Thus in this decade,

critical research on most of the sub-areas of sociology was produced ranging from paid employment (Cavendish, 1982; Pollert, 1981), family (Oakley, 1974; Finch, 1983), relations in the household (Gallie, 1988; Pahl, 1984; Pahl, 1988) to fields such as sports and leisure (Clark and Critcher, 1985).

An area in which rapid strides were made over the last decade was gender and management research. Important contributions were made to the main topic areas, and themes, many of which were previously neglected. These appeared in new journals such as 'Women in Management Review' and 'Gender, Work and Organization'. This research has so far reflected two primary themes; progress made and barriers confronted by women in management. Nevertheless, despite the proliferation of Western studies on women in management, many of which are reviewed in the previous chapter, researchers have acknowledged serious limitations in the women in management literature. One, which has been pointed out, is the lack of studies on women from ethnic minorities in management. Adler et al. (1993) observe that the absence of these women from positions of responsibility has received little attention from the media, political parties, academics and the business communities in these countries.

Overall, there is a consensus that much remains to be done if the women in management research is to be brought up to par with many of the other management areas. Sekaran (1990) has argued that compared to investigations in other management areas, women in management, as a field of research endeavour, is still in its infancy. Similarly, Marshall (1995) argues that gender and management is still a marginalized



field with many of the insights still not incorporated or acknowledged in 'mainstream' theorizing. While both researchers have seen the need for considering gender as potentially relevant to every area of study, they have also agreed on the need to research gender as a theme in its own right, paying it separate attention as appropriate.

## **THE THAI SITUATION**

As mentioned in earlier chapters, there is a lack of data available on Thai female managers. Except for Polnikorn's (1991) study of Thai women manager's work characteristics, there have been no empirical studies on women managers, at any level in Thailand. Unlike the US or the UK where facts and figures are widely available on female managers and their employment patterns, one is hard-pressed to find similar data in Thailand. Even published tables of labour force participation do not always give the desired level of detail, since the category 'administrative, executive and managerial workers' has rather fuzzy boundaries and a management component has to be teased out from this category to explore the prevalence, or lack of, women in management positions in Thailand.

There have been studies on women managers in other Asian countries including Japan, Singapore and Hong Kong (De Leon et al. 1994; Chan et al, 1994; Steinoff and Tanaka (1994). However these are limited in scope and still not able to provide a solid theoretical foundation which could be used as a basis for investigating women in other Asian countries. In the introductory chapter of this study, reasons for using the Western literature as a framework, were provided. Thailand's educational system,



especially management education, is patterned after that of the American system (Polnikorn, 1991). Moreover, Western organizational values are increasingly being adopted by managers in the east via this education and internationalization of the economy (Kanapathy, 1983). These are also among the reasons for the use of Western women in management literature in this study.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS**

As mentioned earlier, the main purpose of this study is to attempt to explain the link between the backgrounds, career aspirations and lifestyles of women managers in Thailand and their professional development and advancement. In looking at the experiences of women managers, one of the objectives is to identify the barriers to the appointment of women to higher level positions.

Thus far, the literature has revealed substantial information on Western women managers' socio-demographic characteristics. We know for instance, that they are younger, better educated, less likely to be married, and if married, less likely to have children. We also know that they tend to be more in staff rather than line positions. Although Hoffarth's (1987) study cited in Chapter III does provide a profile of women managers in Southeast Asia, there is a need to obtain more socio-demographic information specifically on Thai women managers as a starting point before going on to more deeper issues that affect their professional lives. One of the assumptions made in this study is that women managers employed in the public sector will differ in their

backgrounds and work patterns from their counterparts in private firms. Hence the first set of questions the study proposes to answer is:

**What is the general background of the Thai female middle manager in terms of age, family composition, marital status, religion and work experience? What differences exist in the profiles of female managers in the public and those in the private sector? Do women managers in multinational firms have different socio-demographic profiles as compared to those in Thai-owned firms? What have been the career histories of these female managers? In what functions and across what divisions of the organization are they represented?**

We know that Thai women are under-represented in management but we do not have any information on the exact reasons why this occurs. We can start by assuming for instance, that Thai women are under-represented in management because of differences in their socio-demographic backgrounds from Thai men. But in order to prove the validity of this assumption, we need information on the biographical and career data of Thai male managers so that comparisons can be made. Because such data is not available in Thailand, the second question the study proposes to answer is:

**What are the major differences in background and work patterns between male and female middle managers in the two sectors?**

The literature cited earlier also provided three broad perspectives to explain why women are under-represented in management. These three perspectives were identified as the gender-centred, the organizational structure and the organizational processes perspectives. Although women managers face certain common barriers in a majority of countries, the uniqueness of culture in each country can also provide differences in the height and breadth of these barriers. The third question therefore, that the study proposes to answer is:



**What barriers have Thai women managers experienced in their careers to date? Do these barriers differ by sector as well as functional specialization? What facilitating mechanisms do Thai female managers believe have influenced their career development?**

Furthermore, we know from the literature that while men in management were expected to be at work and not with family when work demands it, managerial work for women does not provide the same choice. Because women in management are generally expected not to have families, the literature shows that staying single; and if married; childless, are choices women managers in the West do make. But what of women in a country such as Thailand where cultural pressures on women marrying and having children are very strong? It seems logical to conclude that such women will have greater conflicts between work and family life. The fourth question asked in the study is therefore:

**To what extent do female managers experience role-conflict in balancing their work and non-work lives? What pressures do they experience outside work? How do they resolve some of these conflicts?**

One of the major limitations of management research has been the formulation of universally acceptable definitions of the term 'management'. Within most countries, let alone between them, there is no agreed upon definition concerning the tasks or level of responsibility at which one is deemed to be a manager.

The definition of a middle manager used for this study was a person who supervises and evaluates employees who are assistant managers, supervisors or junior managers,



plans and organizes job-related tasks , commits herself/himself to a career, and reports to those holding positions in senior management.

### **Why study middle managers?**

Middle managers were selected as the level at which the current study is focused for several reasons. Firstly, the number of women in middle management in Thailand makes for a substantial sample; a large number of female managers head functional departments of finance, marketing, personnel and information technology, positions which are considered middle management in private sector firms (Polnikorn, 1991). Second, the number of women appointed as middle managers is growing rapidly; ILO statistics (1992) predict that Thai women middle managers will outnumber their male counterparts in the civil service, over the next five years. Thirdly, new technology and uncertain markets and the like, have significantly affected the role of a middle manager in the West, over the past decade. It is pertinent to explore to what extent these changes have increased the barriers for Thai women in middle management. Lastly, several researchers have mentioned a 'glass ceiling' which operates between upper-middle and senior management positions (Morrison et al, 1987; Madden, 1987). If this is assumed to be true, women in middle management positions encounter significant blocks to their upward mobility.

Because so little material exists, the current study is perceived as exploratory and hence research questions rather than hypotheses are favoured. As Stacey (1969) observes:

Hypotheses which are worth testing can only be developed in areas in which a great deal is known, i.e., where a great deal of empirical field data has already been collected. Before this stage, most research is of an exploratory nature. It is only after much empirical data has been collected and a series of simple relationships, close to reality, have been established that either precise hypotheses can be enunciated for testing or theory derived inductively from empirical data (p.16).

### **Choice of Firms**

Although the objective of the study is to explore the background, careers and lifestyles of Thai women managers in general, it was necessary to segregate the sample by sector as well as by company ownership. This is done for two reasons. First, Thai women managers are not assumed to be homogenous and differences are expected between women in the two sectors. Second, effective functioning of private and public sector organizations depends on different criteria, which in turn influence the selection and recruitment practices, the career patterns as well as the constraints faced by executives in the two sectors. Although domestic firms vary in their operations and practices as opposed to MNCs , this study reflects women employed in domestic firms as well as MNCs as part of the private sector, and those in ministries and state enterprises as the public sector.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

Besides secondary sources, i.e., documents and publications in Thai and English from both the private and public sectors on Thai women managers, quantitative and qualitative methods to achieve the research objectives were used and built into a 3-



stage research design. The first stage was a survey using a structured questionnaire distributed to a representative sample of 530 male and female middle managers asking for factual information on background, education, career history, work-family interface as well as the respondent's opinion on a number of employment-related issues. The second stage of research involved a more qualitative study wherein in-depth, relatively semi-structured, tape-recorded interviews were conducted exploring issues related to career development, barriers and work-family interrelationships with 67 female managers. The final stage of the research was semi-structured interviews with 25 HR/Line managers focusing on attitudes, policies and practices as well as obstacles related to the hiring and promotion of women as managers. Given that roughly 46 per cent of the total managerial personnel is located in Bangkok (Labour Force Survey, 1992) all three phases of the study were conducted in Bangkok.

Two limitations have contributed to the inconsistencies and inconclusiveness of research into women in management. Researchers have pointed out that the excessive use of graduate and undergraduate students as respondents instead of practising managers (Dipboye, 1985; Dobbins and Trahan, 1986; Powell, 1987) as well as the heavy use of structured questionnaires often developed out of the male experience and using the male as the norm (Stevenson, 1990). The current study has addressed these limitations first, by utilizing practising managers in real business settings as respondents and second, by selecting adequate explanations for relationships between variables, through the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods. In the next section, each data collection instrument and its purpose will be elaborated.



## **PHASE I: THE QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY**

It was originally planned that the questionnaire would only be sent to women managers. This was based on the assumption that at least some data on male managers was available and that critical comparisons could be made on the basis of these. After extensive searches both in Thailand and the UK, it was found that no such data actually existed and that, if the backgrounds, career history and development, and other issues relating to women managers were to be effectively evaluated, data on male managers would have to be obtained. Hence a questionnaire survey to both male and female managers was decided upon.

The questionnaire was divided into six sections covering respondents' biographical data, upbringing, present job, career barriers, attitudes towards women in management and the organization of their household activities (See Appendix). It must be pointed out that the questions are not culture-free. An intensive knowledge of Thailand's historical background, its culture, customs, traditions as well as people's attitudes towards authority and their work behaviour (presented in chapter II) was required in order to construct the questionnaire. In the following paragraphs the reasons for including certain sections of the questionnaire will be explained.

The first section of the questionnaire was designed to elicit answers on biographical data, i.e., age, marital status, religion and education so that both a profile of Thai male and female middle managers as well as important differences between male and female

managers in the private and public sectors could be explored. Four questions, on the educational level, type of institution graduated from, the field of study and whether the respondent had an MBA or was currently enrolled for one, were asked. These questions which deal with education are important for two reasons. First, in Thailand, a good education is closely related to one's family background and social class. Hence, one can argue that people from an upper class family background would be more likely to possess both the opportunities and the values which encourage them to seek a good education and become professionals or managers. Second, both the educational institution where one received one's training/degree and the chosen field of education, plays an important role in one's career in Thailand. This question was posed with a view to establishing a link between the field of education together with the level of degree obtained and the type of firm/sector in which an individual was employed. On the basis of existing knowledge it was thought that a number of links might be evident. For example, recruitment aimed at getting people who are from the same **alma mater** was a common phenomenon in certain public sector departments until recently, because it was assumed that graduates from the same school have a common **esprit d'corps** and a tradition of respect for seniority. The assumption was made here that managers who were in MNCs were those who had their higher education abroad, because as pointed out, MNCs prefer to hire those who are fluent in English and have a certain degree of 'westernization' (Lawler et al, 1989). As degrees in science, engineering and business are highly valued in Thai society, and where an MBA qualification is seen as a stepping-stone to career advancement, the question relating to the field of study is relevant.



Section 2 of the questionnaire which related to family ethnic background and upbringing may appear unusual to most Western researchers but it is pertinent in the light of Thailand's complex social structure. To have the 'right' connections and the 'right' class is very important to one's career. An examination of the family background of the Thai bureaucratic elite revealed that the majority of top civil servants came from 'well-connected' families, 40.98 per cent had fathers who were government officials and 31.44 per cent hailed from business families (Dhiravegin, 1985). As explained in Chapter II, the most prestigious position for ethnic Thais has been service in the public sector because this meant service to the King. It is expected therefore, that males and females of Thai ethnic origin are more likely to hold management positions in public sector organizations.

In the Western literature cited in the previous chapter, there appeared to be a strong link between a manager's family background and his/her later achievements. It was therefore of interest to see whether the same was true for Thai male and female managers. The findings also showed that Western women managers are less likely to be married than their male counterparts, and that male managers were more likely to be married to non-working spouses. Both trends are not expected to be true for Thailand, first because women have always had a tradition of full-time employment, and second, because of strong societal pressure on women to marry.

In section 3, subjects were questioned about their present jobs in respect to functional areas of work, amount of authority they held, remuneration levels and whether or not they had taken career breaks. Here, major differences in the patterns of work, levels of



authority, and remuneration between male and female managers in both sectors, were expected. The normal pattern is for government officials to work several years before gaining a promotion and continue to work in the same division or unit until they retire. The data in Chapter II showed however, that even though firms in the private sector offer quicker promotions the attrition rate among male managers in these firms, is high.

The Western literature has provided evidence that women managers specialize in support-services whereas male managers specialize in revenue-generating activities. Both historical precedent as well as the number of Thai women enrolling for business studies and majoring in marketing and finance could cause functional areas in which women managers are employed to be different from that prevalent in the West. It is expected that due to the easy availability of cheap domestic help and members of the extended family who pitch in to help with childcare, unlike Western women managers, taking career breaks is non-existent among Thai female managers.

In section 4 of the questionnaire labelled 'Career progression and barriers', most questions were asked with a view to drawing important similarities and differences in the career histories of Thai male and female managers in the two sectors in terms of how they were recruited, the age at which they obtained their first management job, their mentors, factors that motivated them to work and whether they held gender preferences in terms of their subordinates and bosses. This data was expected to reflect the three major barriers as depicted in the previous chapter, and the extent to which they affected male and female managers in Thailand.

For example, the gender-centred Western research on motivational factors reported that men and women are motivated by different factors, with women paying more attention to intrinsic rather than extrinsic factors. For this study, questions on motivators were framed using the two-factor theory by Herzberg et al (1959) to explore whether the same stands true for Thai managers as well. The question framed on gender-preferences of Thai managers for subordinates and bosses was expected to result in findings similar to studies conducted in Britain and America wherein both male and female subordinates expressed a clear preference for a male supervisor. In a male-dominated society such as Thailand it is usual for male managers to be characterized as more competent, powerful, tough and more deserving of respect than female managers. The questions on gender preference were asked because they can have important implications, both in terms of attitude towards female managers as well as the promotion of women in management.

Section 5 of the questionnaire labelled 'Women in the Organization' was included in order to explore the structural and processes barriers inherent in the organizations the respondents were employed in. Subjects were questioned about the identity and role of mentors. If Thai women in answering the question "Which of the following has given you the most support in your career?" indicate that their support has come mainly from family members or women's networks, whereas men indicate that it has come mainly from male bosses, some link can be established as to why the careers of men proceed at a faster pace. Perceptions male and female managers had of the opportunities available for women in their respective organizations, were also included. This section is interesting to study in the Thai context because there are few equal opportunity laws



and because there are strict patterns of behaviour to which Thai women are supposed to conform if they want to progress in a company. For instance in a study by Suwapan (1985) on Thai female government officials, most of them expected and even accepted the fact that their male colleagues are given promotion over them. It is expected that there will be a varied pattern in the responses of managers in the public sector versus those in private sector because of both the diversity in their profiles and in the patterns of work.

In section 6 of the questionnaire, the issues queried related to the organization of household activities. It was reported in Chapter II, that Thai women manager can devote more time to their careers because of the support they received from the extended family as well as the availability of relatively cheap domestic help. But it is also true to say that trends are changing and it is not unusual to find today, that many Thai families living in urban areas are nuclear and not extended any longer. Moreover, Thailand's rapid expansion has resulted in abundant employment opportunities for the same young women, who until recently, emigrated to Bangkok to take up jobs as domestic assistants. It is expected that the absence of support from the extended family as well as the difficulty of finding domestic help is already having a negative effect on the careers of women managers with young children. We know from the Western literature that men do not share household and childcare tasks equally with their spouses, even though these spouses are in full-time employment. It is expected that this inequity is even worse in Thailand because of the traditional culture, especially in the large number of Chinese households where Confucianism does not endorse male participation in housework.



The work-family conflicts have been well-documented in Western literature and have been reported in the previous chapter, but owing to the lack of data on this topic in Thailand, this section was considered important and expected to provide useful information on organization of household activities, which in turn could offer clues to the Thai managers' lifestyles. Although the issue of balancing work and family responsibilities was more thoroughly pursued during the course of interviews with women managers, the situations under which work-family conflicts occurred was left open-ended in the questionnaire with the intent of measuring whether such conflict-inducing situations were different among males and females.

### **Translating the questionnaire**

The official language of Thailand is Thai which is the language of the education system. English is not in wide use in daily life, although most high-level government officials, senior businesspeople and most managers in MNCs speak it fluently. Many middle-level managers in both some private sector locally-owned firms as well as those in the public sector do not have a good command of English. Hence it was felt that even those who do, might be reluctant to respond to a lengthy questionnaire in English. The decision was therefore taken to translate the questionnaire into Thai. Great care was taken to ensure that the translated version of the questionnaire had the same meaning as that of the English version. A panel of experts made up of five people, two language instructors, two lecturers from the social sciences faculty and a researcher from the CRIB (Centre for Research in Business) of Assumption University in

Bangkok were invited and during the session, blocks of questions were presented. Those who attended the session discussed the topic areas, questioned the utility, eliminated some questions, and added others.

### **Piloting the questionnaire**

Four female and two male department heads (middle-management level) of Assumption University were requested to complete the draft questionnaire. They not only completed the questionnaire as respondents but also provided verbal and written criticism of it. A second draft was prepared. This was distributed to 30 subjects of the target population around the Bangkok area, for the standard pretest of the questions and the instructions. A total of 23 subjects (14 female, 9 men) returned the questionnaires. Revisions were required for two of the questions, one in Section 2 and the other in Section 4. After the final set of revisions, the actual data collection was undertaken.

### **Subject selection: The Private Sector**

As no data is available in Thailand which lists women managers and the firms in which they are employed, two reliable reports published annually were used as a data base from which the sample was drawn. 'Leading Companies in Thailand,' 1994, published by the International Business Research (Thailand) Company Limited lists firms with revenues exceeding 1,000 million baht by name, address, date of establishment, number of employees, nationality of shareholders, total assets as well as the names of board

members and senior management. 'Million Baht Business Information Thailand,' 1993, also published by International Business Research (Thailand) Limited contains comprehensive profiles of about 3000 of the leading companies operating in Thailand under 9 major headings, i.e., Agriculture and Fisheries, Mining and Quarrying, Manufacturing, Electricity, Gas and Water, Construction, Wholesale and Retail Trade, Transportation, Financing, Insurance and Real Estate, and Servicing. A list of 861 firms covering all categories, except Mining and Quarrying (because of the negligible number of female managers) was drawn up. Using stratified random sampling, this list was further narrowed down to 103 firms. The address and telephone number for each of the firms was obtained and the HR manager contacted. He/she was informed of the research objectives, the type and the number of questions as well as requested to distribute the questionnaires among matched (by organizational level) samples of female and male middle managers (See Appendix for cover letter). Managers in a total of 74 out of 103 firms agreed to be represented, 32 of which are MNCs and joint venture corporations. The remaining 42 firms are locally-owned Thai firms (For list of firms see Appendix ). HR managers were sent a package containing the following:

1. Six copies of the survey instrument
2. A cover letter attached with each questionnaire explaining the purpose of the research and assuring the respondent of total confidentiality.
3. A stamped addressed envelope for each respondent to mail the completed questionnaire back to the sender.



### **Subject selection : The Public Sector**

Because it was difficult to locate a centralized body, i.e., Human Resource Department in each sector/unit of public sector enterprises in which the sample of middle managers was located and also because of the constraints in terms of time that would ensue if the Office of the Civil Service Commission was requested to select the sample, it was decided that a different approach would be employed for selecting the respondents in the public sector. A report on the number of Civil servants classified by ministry and gender, published by the Office of the Civil Service Commission shows that the majority of women are concentrated in six ministries. These are Public Health, Interior, Agriculture, Education, Finance and the Office of the Prime Minister. The highest percentage of female executives are in the Ministries of Commerce, Finance and the Office of the Prime Minister (Report of the Civil Service Commission, 1993). Managerial appointments in public sector enterprises range from C11-C9 (senior executives), C8-C6 (middle level executives) and C5-C3 (junior executives). Male and female middle level executives were approached directly by telephone or fax and asked whether they were willing to participate in the study. Of 122 executives approached, 115 executives from six ministries consented and were sent questionnaires.

### **Mailing and follow-up of questionnaires**

A total of 536 questionnaires were mailed to subjects in the two sectors between 2 - 18 August, 1995. The questionnaires were numbered to account for the ones which had

been returned. If the questionnaire was not returned within the specified time of 2 weeks (1st week of September), telephone calls, faxes and reminder notes were sent to the respondents. A total of 386 questionnaires were returned, 14 of which were discarded because the respondent had either left out personal data or neglected to fill out details of career history. The response rate for the usable questionnaires was therefore 372 , or 70 per cent. The response by sector and gender was as follows:

	Male	Female
Public	46	69
Private	118	139
Total	164	208

Size of Sample = 372.

**Data Analysis**

The data was coded, tabulated and analyzed using SPSS version 6. Answers to all the open-ended questions were analyzed for their contents and categorized. Critical differences between male and female managers both in the same sector, as well as the different sectors, were highlighted and some of these were formulated as questions asked during interviews with women managers (Phase II) and HR/Line managers (Phase III) of the research design. The nature of the questionnaire did not allow for a high level of statistical analysis and hence the findings are presented using descriptive statistics, illustrated in the form of bar charts.

## **PHASE II : INTERVIEWS WITH WOMEN MANAGERS**

Having answered two of the research questions and having established a basis for male-female comparison, it was felt that richer and more informative data should be obtained to achieve the primary objective of the study, i.e., to explore the backgrounds, career patterns and lifestyles of Thai female managers. Survey research typically excludes, and interview research typically includes, opportunities for clarification and discussion. Open-ended interview research explores people's view of reality and allows the researcher to generate theory. Sexton, a feminist researcher, stresses this difference in her study of female hospital workers:

Unfortunately the abundance of statistics and generalisation about 'work and its discontents' gives us little real understanding of how women lead their daily work lives, experience their jobs or perceive work-related issues. Personal documents are needed, individual and group portraits of workers, slices of real working life, statements by women themselves - the hand-woven fabric of their daily work lives (Sexton, 1982, p.5)

Therefore while the questionnaire consisted of mainly closed questions which made for easier statistical analysis, the interviews were highly flexible, allowing the women to explain as well as provide examples to illustrate their arguments (See Appendix for Interview Schedule). Because the guarantee of confidentiality included in the questionnaire, did not permit the identification of the women respondents, many of the questions in the first few minutes of the interview touched upon biographical data, i.e., childhood and upbringing, and it was observed that such questions actually succeeded in making the interviewees comfortable and became a good starting point for the establishment of trust. Other aspects which were discussed were their work and non-



work lives, i.e., their motives for working, reasons for joining the respective organizations they had worked for, their attitudes towards career development and towards their firms' policies on women, their consciousness of equality issues and their views on the relationship between their jobs and families. In the next few paragraphs, the rationale for posing some of the questions will be outlined.

In section I of the interview, questions pertaining to childhood and upbringing were asked of the women. These were aimed at establishing whether or not a link existed between the socio-demographic variables as stated in the literature and the women's choice of career. For example, it was earlier reported that factors which have been found to correlate with achieving a position in management are the family socio-economic status, being an eldest child, and quality of parental relationships. The questions about childhood/family background and upbringing can show whether there are similarities/differences between what Rossi, Price, and Hennig and Hackman report on the family profiles of Western women managers and those of their Thai counterparts and to understand how women experienced the relationships between work and family background.

Questions in the section II were mostly related to the educational background of the women managers, for instance, had they gone to public or private schools, what type of subjects did they opt for and whether they had gone on to private or state universities. It was expected that the majority of Thai women managers had been in the science stream, had gone on to mostly state universities and had majored in commerce or business studies. It was expected that the choice of subjects taken at

university level would influence both the sector as well as the functional areas in which women managers were located. To find out whether such a relationship existed among Thai female managers, a question about subjects chosen at the first degree and postgraduate level, was posed.

In section III, questions related to marital life, family decision making, as well as spouse's assistance in family tasks were posed to the women. As mentioned earlier, Western researchers have conducted several studies on women managers and the impact of their jobs on their family lives but no similar studies exist in Thailand. For instance, what is a husband's attitude towards his wife working? What is his contribution to household and childcare activities? How does the woman manager balance work and household tasks? To what extent does having domestic assistance reduce the burden on Thai women managers? Polnikorn (1991) cited the case of a few women managers she had interviewed who had refused promotion to a senior level because they could not find adequate time for childcare. This would imply that the 'glass ceiling' is put there by some women themselves rather than by structural or organizational processes. Because it was felt that this section would provide answers integral to the current study and its objectives, a relatively greater proportion of time was spent on questions related to work and family issues.

Section IV of the interview dealt with the woman's career history. The women were also asked why and how they chose to work in their current organizations. It was assumed that at every stage in the lives of these women, specific relationships must have been established, critical events must have taken place and questions about where



they were going and what they would most like to do in their lives might have been asked and dealt with. The women were asked to start with their first job, the experience they gained, the type of environment they worked under, mainly because it was felt that what they encountered at each stage were likely to have affected the subsequent stages in their careers. They were also asked about why they came to choose a career in management; was it personal factors such as a need for achievement or accomplishment, or family background or just the right circumstances? A major assumption here is that accounts of the women's own experience would be the best source of explanation of how they came into their present middle managerial positions in their respective firms.

Many aspects related to the women's current jobs, the selection and promotion criteria used by their respective organisations, factors linked to their success, desire for further promotion and the role of mentors were posed in Section V of the interview. The questions asked here were intended to explore the validity of two assumptions. One, Thai women in private sector firms had longer and wider career histories because they tend to change employers often, whereas those in the public sector tend to work for one organization throughout their working lives. Second, factors determining success in public sector jobs were different than those in private sector firms. Probing women managers on selection and promotion practices in their firms could help bring out important differences in staffing practices between the sectors and also obtain specific examples of unfair practices, if any, the women had encountered. Women were questioned about the identity and role played by their mentors because it was expected that the responses of older women managers would be different than their younger



counterparts. For example, older women had entered organizations when not many women occupied positions high enough to serve as their mentors. With a considerable number of Thai women achieving managerial positions over the last decade, it was interesting to find how many of the interviewees had women managers as mentors as well as the influence of these mentors on the woman's career development.

Questions asked in the succeeding section probed the day-to-day activities and relationships at work. Rather than ask women to specify each activity they did, a broad question 'Can you describe a typical day at work?' was asked. This allowed an insight not only into the type of tasks executed but also the average time each consumed. It was expected that a lot of variation would exist between jobs in the two sectors as well as in different functional specializations. For example, a woman in marketing would spend a considerable amount of time in the field and be expected to entertain clients in the evenings, as well. Questions about the Thai style of management, as well as whether women managers used the same style with male and female subordinates, were asked. Previous studies on management style have covered only public sector management personnel, most of whom were male. It is interesting to find out whether Thai women managers employed the same management style as their male colleagues, if they employed the same style with their male and female subordinates, and whether female managers who are younger and perhaps foreign-educated, used a similar management style as their older counterparts. Although questions relating to gender preferences for subordinates and bosses were asked in the questionnaire survey, they were not pursued in sufficient depth, hence it was decided that the issue would be raised again in the interviews with women managers. By asking these questions, I

wanted to explore whether Thai women held strong gender preferences and if they did, whether these arose from sex-role stereotypes or from their previous work experience.

A relatively higher proportion of time was spent on section VI which concerned the barriers women managers encountered in their execution of their tasks as managers. The previous chapter has cited literature on barriers arising from gender, the organizational structure, as well as the organization processes. Although some questions about barriers have been asked in previous studies of women managers in Southeast Asia (Hoffarth, 1985; Polnikorn, 1991), both studies have neglected to explore the issue in any but a cursory manner. It was expected that the age and ownership of organizations would influence the type of barriers women managers encountered. For instance, gender-centred and organization processes barriers, would be more prevalent among women in private sector firms whereas structural barriers would be greater among public sector organizations.

The final section was related to the women's perception of equal opportunities in Thailand as well as in the firms they were employed in. Women were asked their views on equality legislation as enacted by the Thai government, and whether they felt more legislation to protect women's employment was necessary. On the whole, it was expected that women in the public organizations would be more positive in their responses as compared to those employed in private firms, because of more equitable policies operating in these organizations.



## **Selection of women managers for interviews**

Of the 208 female managers who had completed the questionnaire in Phase One, 72 were approached (36 in the public and 36 in private sector firms) for interviews. As far as possible, efforts were made to ensure that the sample had good sectoral spread, i.e., represented a wide range of services and functions and that the same number of respondents were chosen to ensure intersectoral comparisons. The women selected for the interview were those who satisfied the following criteria:

1. They were Thai citizens, but of any ethnic background.
2. Their career history included holding a managerial position for at least 5 years in a public or private firm (listed on the Stock Exchange of Thailand, SET).
3. They had been middle managers for at least 2 years in their present organizations at the time of the interview.

The above criteria was considered important because firstly, this was a study of women born and raised in Thailand, who are homogenous in terms of language and culture, who have embarked on their careers and gained the majority of their job experience in Thailand. Secondly, one of the objectives of the research was to study the career histories of Thai women managers and 5 years was considered a sufficiently long period within which a woman might have gained adequate work experience. Lastly, the study focuses on middle managers and it was felt that women who had been recently promoted or been in the position for only a few months, would not be fully acquainted with the challenges and complexities of her role as a middle manager, hence 2 years was stipulated as the minimum period for the interviewee to have held the post as a middle manager.



Having drawn up a list of potential interviewees, telephone calls were made directly to them, explaining the purpose of the research, the time it would take and the type of questions they would be asked. It was strongly emphasized that the information given would remain anonymous. All, except five of the women agreed to participate, two claimed to be overloaded with other commitments, one said she had to go abroad for training and the remaining two (both government officials) said they would rather not participate in interviews in which they were asked to talk about their jobs. In all, 67 women (34 from private firms of which 18 women were from multinationals, and 33 from public enterprises) were interviewed between 10 September - 20 December, 1995 (A profile of respondents is given in the Appendix). Interviews were mostly conducted in Thai, (except in cases where the interviewee was fluent in English), lasted from one to one and a half hour, and in most cases, were tape-recorded (See Research Note).

### **Research Note on Interviews**

When I met the interviewees, I sensed their enthusiasm was tempered with hesitancy. Some were puzzled about why they had been selected. Unaccustomed to being interviewed, they found it hard to believe that there would be a thesis on 'ordinary' women like themselves. Many were also worried that if they disclosed too much, their jobs and professional reputation would be threatened. Despite my assurances of confidentiality, that I would reveal neither individual nor employer's names, some remained wary and requested that the session was not recorded.

Finch has commented (1984:78) 'the ease with which one can get women to talk in an interview situation depends not so much on one's skills as an interviewer, not one's expertise as a sociologist, but upon one's identity as a woman'. In conducting the interviews I found there was a certain amount of interest in my own situation. What sort of person was I? How did an Indian woman such as myself, come to marry a Thai-Chinese? How did I manage my full and part-time jobs as well as take care of the family? How did I come to be interested in the subject of women managers? British sociologist Ann Oakley (1981) advocated a new model of interviewing women that strove for intimacy and included self-disclosure and believing the interviewee. While arguing against 'treating the women who are interviewed as merely data providers' (p.47), she strongly suggested that feminist interviewing involves commitment on the part of interviewers to form a relationship, and on the part of interviewees to participate with sincerity. In order to encourage the development of trust, I defined myself as a learner and as listener, rather than as a purely academic researcher. I informed the women that I had some questions which I would put to them but they could also ask me questions without any hesitation, during the course of the interview. Only following this, could I record conversations with most of the women managers about their jobs and aspects of their personal lives.

### **PHASE III : INTERVIEWS WITH HR /LINE MANAGERS**

One of the main reasons why previous studies on women in management have often resulted in contradictory findings is because researchers have emphasized the micro (the individual) rather than the macro (organization context) in which women function



as managers (Sekaran, 1990). Although equal opportunities legislation exists in most countries in the developed world, it has often been found that human resource management principles and practices, instead of helping to solve some of the problems women encounter at work, are often the vehicles of discrimination. The chapter on Women and Work in Thailand (chapter III) indicates that the status of Thai women is marginalized because not only are equal employment laws erratically imposed, the general employment situation of women, specifically in terms of hiring and promotion, has been largely ignored by researchers.

The objective of this phase was twofold; to collect data on the current position of women across levels in various organizations and to explore whether the operating norms and policies of a company, including the prevailing attitudes and behaviour of the decision makers within, posed obstructions to women, besides the gender-centred or structural barriers.

Initially, a structured mail questionnaire was planned, under several headings, i.e., secondary data on the number of women managers and their functional locations, organizational practices related to selection and promotion, HR/Line manager's perception of equal opportunities in their organizations, their attitudes towards women in management and other general questions, most using a multiple-choice format with some open-ended questions for managers to elaborate their answers. On piloting the questionnaire to 7 HR managers however, it was found that the breadth of the responses was insufficient to arrive at a comprehensive analysis of the situation, most managers having provided 'socially acceptable' answers and all, except one, ignoring



the open-ended questions. Hence the questionnaire was rejected and a structured interview schedule was used (See Appendix for Interview Schedule) which provided richer and more informative data. Structured interviews were also decided upon for the following reasons:

1. The topics in the interview were confidential and of a sensitive nature;
2. It provided the opportunity to probe the manager's behaviour and attitudes in relation to women as managers.
3. HR managers are generally busy people with heavy commitments and a face to face interaction was expected to yield better results than the written word.

The interview was planned in five sections and although it was expected that the majority of HR/Line managers would be fluent in English, a translated version in Thai was prepared for my own convenience in case certain respondents were not comfortable speaking in English. Although there were two sections where a multiple choice format (using showcards) was employed, the loose structure of the interview provided the opportunity to create questions in order to probe those responses which were particularly relevant or totally different from responses of other interviewees.

In the introductory stage of the interview, managers were requested to provide a general overview of their organization's personnel policies with special emphasis on the selection of managers, e.g., what criteria were used to assess candidates? what sources were used? who made the final decision in the selection process? did selection vary among departments and divisions? If the firm was a MNC, managers were questioned about whether staffing policies were formulated at the branch level or if

they were handed down from the parent company. It was also expected that the selection practices would vary not only with the firm and the industry in which it operates but also with the sector. It was expected that the public sector and MNCs would have more formal and systematic policies than certain locally-owned firms in the private sector which have no formal HR departments and hence a certain measure of informality in staffing decisions. The methods by which organizations recruit also has a significant impact on the number of women in management. For instance, head hunting is now an important method of recruiting upper- middle and senior managers in Thailand, however the majority of managers recruited in this manner are male. Although most MNCs and many Thai corporations design their HR policies on patterns employed by western organizations, the unique Thai socio-cultural environment as well as the gaps in the enforcement of equal opportunity laws can create disparities between policy and practice. By using probes and asking for specific examples, it was possible to pinpoint such disparities in some of the firms in the sample.

The second stage of the interview proceeded with questions on the current positions and the number of women managers across levels and functions. It was mentioned earlier that women managers in the study are not expected to have similar occupational specializations as those characteristic of women managers in the West. Questioning which management functions are filled by women and why, and exploring the areas or functions the HR/Line manager would consider women unsuitable for, helped to explain both if and why women are utilized differently in Thai organizations, as well as the specific firms' policies in employing women as managers. It is logical to expect that



particular characteristics of a firm contribute to different employment policies towards women in management, for example, service-oriented firms where women are the majority of consumers would tend to have more women in upper-level positions. A question in this section also required the HR manager to relate his/her experiences in managing women. Western literature relating to the personal experiences of executives evaluating women, indicates that those executives who have actual working experience with women managers are most likely to be strongly favourable as compared with those lacking such experiences. By asking this question, it was possible to explore if this also holds true for Thai managers.

In the section III, HR /Line managers were not asked questions but asked to read showcards containing stereotypical statements about women managers. Two examples of the ten showcards are reproduced here, (the others can be found in the Interview Schedule in Appendix ).

**Showcard 4:**

I probably would not choose a woman for promotion if any equally qualified male were available:

- a) strongly disagree
- b) disagree
- c) agree
- d) strongly agree.

**Showcard 6:**

Most women who aspire to become managers in the business world do not have the personal characteristics needed to become successful managers in the company

- a) strongly disagree
- b) disagree

- c) agree
- d) strongly agree.

The decision to use showcards for the following two sections was twofold; one, if straight-forward questions on attitudes towards women in management were asked, the HR/Line managers would be more inclined to give 'socially acceptable' answers rather than their honest opinions. Second, as each question came with a choice of four possible answers, i.e., strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree, it was easier for managers to pick their choices straight from the showcards. One advantage of using the showcards was that managers were asked to provide explanations or examples of incidents to back up their answers, which added richer meaning to the data. Bowman (1962) argues that conscious/unconscious assumptions as to the criteria for who gets promoted are based on unwritten policies that influence promotional practices more strongly than company-written policies. Although the responses to the showcards might not determine exactly what final decision a manager might make in the selection and promotion of women, it is probably logical to conclude that managers who respond with "strongly agree" to most of the statements are not in favour of women managers and are likely to restrict the extent to which women are allowed to participate and carry out specific assignments.

In Section IV, managers were presented with eight statements of the negative consequences which are believed to occur if women were promoted into management, three of which are reproduced as follows:

Resistance from male managers

Lower productivity or work efficiency in departments managed by women



Poor customer-relations where women dealt with male clients.

Managers were asked to indicate whether they saw these as 'major', 'some', 'minor' or 'no problem'. As in the above section, if managers indicated that they saw all or the majority of statements as 'major' problems, their hesitancy in having women in management would be understandable. Differences in anticipation of problems would also indicate the degree to which a manager is motivated towards moving from a predominantly male work force to one more integrated in terms of gender.

The final section of the interview dealt with the question of training. This was an off-shoot of the interviews with women managers, a large percentage of whom indicated that they lacked adequate training opportunities. When asked this question during previous interviews (Arttachariya, 1994), line managers reported that women have ample opportunities for training but they either reject these or refuse to make the effort to go to the off-the-job training venues. Probing was necessary to find out if the training offered was of the right sort, the timings and the venues, also the number of male versus female managers in different training programs.

### **Selection of HR/Line Managers for interviews**

The managers were purposefully selected rather than selected at random, as the most meaningful data would come from a cross-section of companies, some of which had a sizeable number of women in management positions, to those which had few or almost no women in management. It was decided that the sample would be selected mainly

from firms in which the women managers who were interviewed, were employed. To avoid a breach of confidentiality, HR/Line managers were not informed of the interviews with women managers. A list of 31 potential interviewees was drawn up and were approached directly by telephone. Twenty five HR/Line managers indicated their willingness to participate and were interviewed between 2 - 29 December, 1995 (A profile of these managers appears in the Appendix). The interviews lasted almost an hour and always took place in the privacy of the interviewees' meeting room or office. Care was taken to reassure the interviewees that their names would not be mentioned in any part of the study.

## **SUMMARY**

In this chapter, the 3-stage research design employed for the current study has been explained. Owing to the lack of data on Thai managerial personnel, it was felt that a questionnaire survey would provide a picture of male-female representation in management, their career patterns and lifestyles. 372 managers (164 male, 208 female) representing both the public and private sector responded to the questionnaire, the data of which was analyzed using SPSS software. This data however, as explained above, adequately allowed for male-female comparisons but did not provide a comprehensive insight into the background, career history and lifestyles of women managers and hence, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 67 women managers occupying middle management positions. The data which emerged from the interviews was helpful not only in building up a profile of the female middle manager but also in examining her motives for working, her career progression, her encounter with the



three types of barriers, both in her present firm as well as in the firms she had previously worked for, and the ways in which she managed to maintain a balance between work and family responsibilities. Finally, as human resource policies and practices were often seen as vehicles of discrimination against women, 25 HR/Line managers from some of the firms in which the women managers were employed, were interviewed. In these interviews, the policies regarding recruitment and selection of women as managers, their representation in the different departments and functions as well as the attitude of the HR/Line managers towards women in management, were explored. In the next chapter, the findings from the questionnaire survey on Thai male and female middle managers will be reported.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **THAI MALE AND FEMALE MANAGERS**

This chapter reports the results of a survey of Thai male and female managers undertaken to gather data on work and home-related issues. The chapter first pinpoints the differences that exist between Thai male and female managers in general, and second, examines whether differences exist between managers in the public and private sectors. The chapter is organized around the three themes introduced in Chapter I. In the first section of this chapter, biographical data on the sample, the occupational sectors in which male and female managers are placed and the cultural values which underlie such placements is presented. This section also establishes links between managers' early socialization and their career choices. The second section examines the family responsibilities of managers, the division of household tasks, leisure activities and potentials for conflicts that arise from maintaining balance between home and work responsibilities. The final section of the chapter deals with career progress and the three types of barriers; gender-centred, organization structure and organizational processes encountered by Thai male and female managers. Some of the findings are displayed in the form of barcharts at the end of this chapter.

#### **WHO ARE THE THAI MALE AND FEMALE MANAGERS?**

In order to establish the differences that exist in the socio-demographic characteristics of Thai male and female managers and to come up with a profile of the average Thai woman manager, information on variables such as age, marital status, religion, education, etc. had to be obtained. These are presented in the following paragraphs.



**Age:** The majority of managers in both public and private sectors fall into the 30-40 years range category, with women on the whole, being slightly younger than men. Exactly the same percentage (42.8) of male and female managers fall into the age bracket 20-35 years. (See Chart 6.1). Both male and female managers in the public sector tend to be much older than male and female managers in private firms. For example, 69 per cent males and 52.8 per cent female managers in the public sector are over 40 years of age as compared with 19.1 per cent male and 20.6 per cent females in private firms. Overall, the youngest managers, both male and female are those employed by multinational corporations, the average age of such managers being 32. Three observations can be made on the basis of the data obtained. First, a relatively larger proportion of women remain in their middle management jobs upto the age of 60 (retirement) as compared with men, and this pattern is most evident among women employed in locally-owned private firms and those in the public sector. Second, there are few male managers who remain in middle management in multinational firms after they reach the age of 40, whereas the same is not true for female managers in MNCs, whose age profile more closely matches those in the locally-owned private firms. Lastly, more women in their 30s are being promoted to middle management levels in public sector organizations, a pattern which is not surprising given that many more Thai men are quitting the public sector for more lucrative jobs in private firms.

**Marital Status/Children:** Although the majority of male and female managers in both sectors are married, a larger percentage of women are single (40 per cent female versus 32.2 per cent male). Chart 6.2 shows that single managers are more likely to be found in private sector firms. The highest proportion of single women managers were

in the MNCs. Of those married, both male and female Thai managers had on average two children. A greater proportion of the managers in the private sector had younger children. For example, 53.8 per cent of these managers had their youngest child less than 6 years ago as compared with 22.4 per cent of the sample of managers in the public sector. And whereas 6 per cent of public sector male and female managers already had their youngest child in employment, only 2 per cent of private sector managers (none of them male) were in a similar category. The fact that managers in private firms are much younger than those in public sector organizations provides an explanation for the differences in age of their children.

**Spouse's Employment:** Both male and female managers in the sample had spouses who worked full-time. Part-time employment is uncommon in Thailand and only 4 per cent of the sample of male managers had spouses who worked part-time. Nevertheless spouses' occupation differed by gender; whilst the majority of women managers were married to businessmen or professionals (74.4 per cent), almost half the sample of male managers (49.5 per cent) had spouses who were in non-managerial positions. In terms of educational qualifications, women managers tended to hold equivalent qualifications to their spouses, whilst male managers were more likely to be married to women who had a lower educational qualification than themselves.

**Religion:** Buddhism is the official religion of Thailand. Reflecting this, 95.5 per cent of the sample registered their religion as Buddhism. All managers in the public sector were Buddhist. Other religions represented in the sample of private managers were Muslim (1.1 per cent), Christian (3.2 per cent) and Hindu (0.5 per cent).



**Ethnic Background:** Over three-quarters of the sample classified themselves as Thai. Thais were more prevalent among managers in the public sector (82.6 per cent) than those in private firms (72 per cent). This is in line with the fact that the majority of second-generation Chinese (which includes most of the sample of managers) were born on Thai soil and are Thai citizens. It is first-generation immigrants from China who are classified as 'aliens' and are not legally of Thai nationality. Only 15.3 per cent of the sample described themselves as Thai-Chinese and 8.3 per cent as Chinese. Most of these managers who claimed Chinese origins were those in private firms. No differences were observed between the sexes as far as ethnic background is concerned.

**Education:** Slightly over half the sample had a first degree, 40 per cent held postgraduate qualifications and 1.6 per cent, doctoral degrees. A mere 2 per cent of the sample had no college education. Slightly more women managers (58.3 per cent) had first degree qualifications as compared with their male counterparts (53.3 per cent). A larger proportion of older men had secondary school education (4.2 per cent) as their highest qualification as compared with older women (1.3 per cent). On average, a slightly higher percentage of male managers (41.3 per cent) had postgraduate degrees compared with female managers (39.9 per cent). An important difference between public and private sector managers was the country in which they had studied at university. The majority of both male and female managers in the public sector had studied in Thai universities for both first and postgraduate degrees. In contrast, in the private sector, slightly over half had studied for their postgraduate degrees at foreign universities. Overall, 52 per cent of male managers, and 43 per cent of female managers in MNCs had earned a postgraduate qualification abroad.

There appeared to be no differences between the sexes in the two sectors in terms of the main subjects studied at first degree level (See Chart 6.3). The majority of managers had majored in science, business administration and economics. Nevertheless, there was a difference between the sexes in their selection of two specific fields: technology and arts. Almost a quarter of the sample of women managers (23.6 per cent) had a first degree in arts as compared with 18.4 per cent of male managers. Interestingly, most male (31.7 per cent) and female managers (29.2 per cent) with first degrees in art; i.e., history, political science, education, were employed in the public sector. Business administration and economics were subjects that were more common among managers of both sexes in private firms. The 'other' category on Chart 6.3 included subjects such as Agriculture, Arts and Crafts, Home Economics and Physical Education. The data showed that more women in MNCs and locally-owned firms had taken either Arts and Crafts and Home Economics for their first degrees, as compared with those in the public sector who had chosen either Agriculture or Physical Education.

As mentioned earlier an MBA, especially from a well-known university, is seen as a prerequisite for advancement to a managerial position. A quarter of the sample had obtained their MBAs prior to getting their present posts whilst 6 per cent were currently enrolled for one. Of those managers who had obtained their MBA qualifications abroad, the majority had studied in the US, followed by the UK, Australia and New Zealand. Both male and female managers in the public sector, who had studied abroad were more likely to obtain graduate qualifications in science or art



rather than business administration. Thus whilst almost 36 per cent of male and 30 per cent female managers in private firms had obtained an MBA, only 10.3 per cent of managers in the public sector had done so. And of those managers in the public sector who were enrolled for postgraduate qualifications in Thai universities, the majority had opted for degrees in public administration.

MBA courses have been offered in Thailand for over a decade and many state-owned and private firms offer MBAs in affiliation with foreign universities. For example, Thailand's oldest state university, Chulalongkorn, offers the MBA (English language programme) in association with the University of Pennsylvania and the Wharton Business School. Despite the high quality of such programmes however, it is more than usual to find that students who can pass the required admission tests and who have adequate financial resources, prefer to continue their studies abroad, for two reasons. One, degrees from foreign universities, especially those in the US, UK and Australia, are valued more highly than those from local universities. Second, it is believed that the experience of going abroad to study increases one's self-confidence, while at the same time, allows the student to develop better English language skills.

## **EXPLANATIONS FOR MALE AND FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN MANAGEMENT**

As explained in the literature, there are certain factors in early life development that play a role in the choice of career as well as career success. Among such factors are socio-economic status (SES), sibling order, parental occupations, their level of education, etc. These are presented in the next few paragraphs.

**Family Background/Upbringing:** The majority of managers from both sectors were of middle class status, however they had parents of different ethnicity. Both male and female managers in private firms were more likely to have parents of Chinese origin as compared with those in the public sector, whose parents were more likely to be of Thai origin. A mere 7.3 per cent of the sample were first-born. In terms of parental level of education, there were only slight differences between male and female managers in the overall sample. Male managers in the public sector were those who had fathers with the highest educational qualifications. The majority of mothers of managers in both sectors (56.1 per cent) had only secondary school education; a little less than a quarter of mothers had high school certificates and a mere 8.3 per cent had bachelor degrees. The better qualified mothers were more likely to be mothers of women managers in the public sector, which is striking in that women managers in the public sector are older than those in private firms and therefore might be expected to have less well-educated mothers. Two explanations can be offered for this phenomenon. First, mothers of public sector managers were more likely to be of Thai origin and were better able to avail of the limited educational opportunities at the time, as compared to women of Chinese origin. Second, whilst the majority of mothers of managers in private firms were self-employed or assisted in family businesses, mothers of public sector women managers were also more likely to obtain jobs in the public sector and through such jobs, obtain higher education.

Parental occupations also indicate the relatively privileged background of the sample of managers, over a third of whom had fathers who held positions in management (32.5



per cent) and slightly over a half (54 per cent) of whom were entrepreneurs. Overall, slightly more women than male managers had fathers in professional, managerial, and self-employed categories. A large proportion of mothers were housewives, although more male managers tended to have mothers who were businesswomen. More women (15.9 per cent) indicated that their fathers had a strong influence over their choice of careers than men (9.9 per cent). As expected, the responses on the open-ended question posed here indicated that fathers and mothers who were in public sector organizations had influenced their children, both male and female, to seek employment in the public sector.

Roughly a quarter of the males and slightly over a quarter of the female sample indicated that they were not given household tasks while young. Of those given household tasks, over half the sample of men (58 per cent) said that they assisted their parents in their family business as compared with 41.6 per cent of women. The majority of women managers who had helped their parents run the family business while young were first-born children, and 28 per cent of these first-born women had no male siblings. Women (76 per cent) were more likely to be given tasks related to care of siblings, managing household expenses and housework than men (55 per cent).

## **PRESENT EMPLOYMENT**

**Length Of Time In Present Organization:** Overall, female managers tended to stay longer in organizations than males. Whilst 53.3 per cent of male managers had stayed

in their current organizations between 5 and 15 years, a slightly higher proportion of female managers (58 per cent) had been employed in their current organization for the the same number of years. There was no difference in the number of years spent in the their current organizations between male and female managers in the public sector, both sexes had on average served 15.6 years. Overall, female managers in MNCs had spent the least amount of time in their present organizations and this is because they were the youngest managers in the sample (See Chart 6.4).

**Number of Employers:** Whereas the majority of male managers (57.1 per cent) had changed employers four times, the majority of female managers had had only two employers and over a quarter (28 per cent) had worked for the same firm since the start of their careers. Almost all the women in the latter category were employed in public sector organizations.

**Time spent in present position:** Male managers in both sectors had been in their present mid-level management for slightly longer than their female counterparts, 3.1 years versus 2.9 years (See Chart 6.5). However there is no difference between the sexes in the age of first managerial appointment. The majority of males had reached managerial level by the age of 27.8 and females at 28.3. Female managers in the public sector appear to have to wait longer for their appointments to managerial posts (30.7 years) as compared with those in private firms (27 years) or male managers in general (27.8 years). As explained in Chapter II, managerial appointments in public sector organizations take much longer than those in MNCs and locally-owned firms. Hence it was not surprising to see that a large proportion of male and female managers in the



public sector were in their present positions for over 5 years. Almost half the sample of women managers in MNCs had been in their present positions for less than one year, and this can be attributed to their being the youngest managers in the sample.

**Managerial appointments:** Starting from junior level within the company, slightly over 40 per cent of the sample had been promoted from within to their present positions. More females than males in the private sector had been recruited through executive search firms and head hunters. Less than 10 per cent of the sample said that they had used informal approaches to obtain their present positions. Most of those who were recruited through informal approaches were in locally-owned firms. It was clear from the interviews that the approach most commonly used was called *faaq* in Thai, which means having an influential person, either inside or outside the company to intercede on one's behalf. It is suspected (through the interviews with women managers) that the number of managers who were brought into their firms by this means, was much higher than that indicated on the questionnaires. Because the term *faaq* has negative connotations (such a person is perceived as one who cannot obtain a job on his/her own merit and has to rely on outside help), respondents who had used this approach, were more likely to have avoided giving a truthful answer to the question.

**Occupational Specialization:** As Chart 6.6 shows, there are gender differences in the occupational distribution of managers in firms. Female managers were predominant in areas such as administration (9.6 per cent), finance and accounting (30.1 per cent), public relations (8.4 per cent), marketing (28.1 per cent), computing (7.2 per cent) and

personnel (4.2 per cent). Male managers were found in the areas of marketing and sales (36.1 per cent), production/operations management (16 per cent), purchasing (9 per cent), and general management (15 per cent). There is also a difference between the occupational specializations of female managers in the two sectors. In the public sector, women managers tend to be concentrated in the areas of administration, accounting and personnel, whereas in private firms, they tend to be found more in marketing, finance and general management. The tendency for women managers to be concentrated more in caring functions (as cited in the Western literature) is therefore more evident among women in public sector organizations as opposed to those in private sector firms in Thailand.

**Hours Worked Per Week:** The study did not find any differences in the hours male and female managers worked. Slightly more than half the women (55.8 per cent) and men (57.9 per cent) reported that they worked an average week in excess of 50 hours with 13.8 per cent of men and 8.8 per cent of women working over 60 hours. (See Chart 6.7). Nevertheless, there was a difference between hours worked in the two sectors with only 7.2 per cent of men and 7 per cent of women in the public sector working 60 hours or more. In the private sector, 36.4 per cent of men and 24.8 per cent of women reported that they worked 60 hours or more. Overall, the longest working days were put in by both male and female managers in multinational organizations, and this could be attributed to the nature of their occupational specializations.



**Remuneration:** In the current study, slightly less than half the women (46.9 per cent) and slightly over half the men (54 per cent) most of them in private firms earned over Baht 500,000 per annum. Hence there was not much difference between men and women's earnings in the private sector. In general, slightly more males (54.1 per cent) as compared with women (46.9 per cent) had earnings of over Baht 500,000. In contrast, more women (28 per cent) than men (19.6 per cent) earned salaries of less than Baht 300,000 (Baht 42 is roughly equivalent to 1£, as of 1996). (See Chart 6.8). There are differences between male and female manager's contribution to household income. Over three-quarters of the male sample (84.6 per cent), provide the primary income in the household. Slightly over half of the sample of female managers (56 per cent), the majority of whom were married, said that their contribution was not the primary source of income of the household.

## **Discussion**

Two explanations can be offered for the slightly younger age of Thai female managers. One, the rapid expansion of the economy during the past two decades opened up many opportunities for women in areas previously dominated by men, particularly for younger women with business and English language skills. Second, the majority of those taking Civil Service exams and gaining appointments at an early age are women. Another interesting finding in terms of age is the decreasing number of male managers over the age of 35, in multinational firms. Again, two explanations can be offered as to why this is happening. One is that MNCs tend to promote managers at a quicker rate than both Thai-owned and public sector organizations and since men are promoted quicker than women, it is possible that many of them have already been promoted to

senior management by the time they are in their forties. Second, male managers, more than females, tend to quit private firms to start their own businesses.

That a higher proportion of Thai female managers are married and have children can be traced to the cultural stigma attached to both being an unmarried women and being childless in most Asian countries. The fact that most women managers have the assistance of live-in household help and/or extended families explains why it is possible for them to have children and continue in full-time employment.

In terms of the numbers of hours worked, managers of both sexes in private firms were four times more likely to work a 60-hour week or more, as compared with those in the public sector. If commitment is measured in terms of the long hours and length of time one is at one's desk, then it can be concluded that there is no difference in the commitment of Thai male and female managers in both sectors because they work the same number of hours. And yet, despite equal levels of commitment, and lower attrition rates, more female managers are clustered in the lower income brackets as compared with their male counterparts.

### **Thai Female Managers : A Profile**

Based on the data thus far, it is possible to arrive at a profile of the average Thai women manager. The average Thai female middle manager is between 30-35 years, is a Buddhist, and works in Bangkok. She is married with two children, and has worked continuously throughout her career without interruptions for family or home-making responsibilities. She is more likely to have a background in finance or marketing and is



promoted to her current position from inside the firm. She is more than likely to hold a postgraduate qualification. Her annual income is approximately 450,000 Baht. Having worked for 2 employers in her career, she has been with her present firm for less than 8 years. She spends 50 hours a week on her work and roughly 40 hours on household tasks.

## **GENDER DIFFERENCES IN ORGANIZATION OF HOUSEHOLD TASKS**

A common theme running through most of the women in management research is that of 'striking a balance' between work and family. The majority of the current sample were in atypical marriages (married to spouses in full-time employment) and because of this fact, needed to employ domestic help or have relatives who could assist with childcare/domestic tasks. As expected, slightly under half the sample of women managers (48.1 per cent) had full-time paid help at home. This was more likely among women in private firms than those in public enterprises. Men, on the whole tended to have less full-time paid help, however they appeared to get more help from family members than women in the sample. Part-time paid help is not common in Thailand and is resorted to more by single male and female managers. Only 9.7 per cent of women and 9.3 per cent of male managers employed part-time help. Women managers in private firms indicated that they employed paid help as well as had live-in relatives, who helped on a daily basis. Overall, among all the managers surveyed, it was male managers in public enterprises who were more likely to manage their households without employed help. Forty three per cent of such managers reported having no employed help as compared to 28.7 per cent of males in the private sector. (See Chart 6.9).

## **Household division of labour**

Unlike in the West, the focus on providing care for children or for the elderly has not been on organizations and institutions but through the family in Thailand. In response to the question: 'Which of the following do you use paid help for?', the majority of both men and women responded that they used paid help mainly for cleaning followed by childcare and eldercare. Although on the whole, more women managers than men had employed help on all categories, i.e., childcare, cleaning, cooking, laundry and others, there were no major differences in this pattern, between women managers in the public and private sectors.

Managers were asked how much time they, and their spouses spent on childcare and household tasks per week. In relation to domestic division of labour there is a contrast between the situation of Thai men and women. By and large, Thai women spend more hours than men per week on 4 out of 6 categories, i.e., cooking, childcare, cleaning, and grocery shopping. The data shows that women take primary responsibility for the care of their children after they return home from work. The largest chunk of women's time appears to be spent on childcare (23.2 hours per week) followed by cooking (5.4 hours per week). Therefore, the total number of hours women spend at home on housework and childcare adds up to 44.6 hours per week as compared to 36 hours per week for men. (See Charts 6.10 and 6.11). Given the fact that Thai women spend an average of almost 9 hours more per week on home and childcare, it seems likely that



they are carrying out a second shift, despite having full-time help and/or relatives who live-in.

When the sample was asked whether they believed household tasks should be shared equally, the large majority of both sexes indicated their agreement. But in reality, this does not seem to be happening. Male respondents were more likely to help out with jobs that amounted to fewer hours per week. Moreover, they tended to involve themselves in those activities which did not have to be done on a daily basis, i.e., house and car maintenance, painting and decorating, and lawn mowing, unlike women who undertook jobs which required their attention daily, such as childcare, cooking and cleaning.

What is interesting is that women expressed little overt dissatisfaction with the situation. In their open-ended responses to the question of husbands' involvement with household tasks, many reported that their spouses were domestically incapable and felt it was up to them to make the sacrifice necessary to running a home as well as working. The common theme appearing in their responses was 'if a woman's work is affected by household chores, it's okay, the same isn't true if a man's work is affected'. Some made excuses for their spouses' low contribution, e.g., 'he's tired', 'he's too busy at the office' and even a statement such as, 'he earns more after all!'.

## **Leisure Activities**

One might reason that if a woman chooses to use domestic help to care for her home and children, she has considerable freedom to pursue individual interests in the arts, athletics and social activities. However on most leisure activities, except watching television, Thai women appeared to spend less time than men. For instance, while Thai men averaged 7 hours a week 'going out with friends', the figure was only 4.8 hours for women. Again, while men indicated that they spent time on sports (mainly golf), fitness and meditation, most women indicated that they relaxed by staying home, experimenting with new types of cooking/baking and entertaining their relatives and friends. Doing jobs around the house and playing games with their children were also activities women reported as part of their leisure. Thus while Thai men seem orientated to spend their spare time on outdoor activities, very few Thai women, mostly those single, spent their leisure hours outside the circle of home and family. (See Chart 6.12).

## **Conflicts**

Respondents were asked 'Have you ever experienced conflicts between work and family responsibility?'. Slightly over half the sample of married women (56.7 per cent) and slightly under half the sample of married men (45 per cent) reported 'some' conflict. Very few (3.3 per cent women and 2.2 per cent of men) responded 'yes, often'. Those free from conflict who responded 'no, never' were younger managers, most of whom were single. In filling in an open-ended question on the possible causes



of conflict, both men and women complained of overload, 'having too much to do and too little time'. Significantly, while most men's reference to 'too little time' was made in conjunction with their work lives, for most women, it meant too little time to devote to family life.

Another difference that seems noteworthy is that women tended to express somewhat more dissatisfaction with themselves as wives than do men as husbands, and this clear from the statements of the women:

I do not have enough time to talk to my husband and children

I miss the conversations my husband and I had before I got this promotion.

I don't see enough of my family during weekdays and I feel guilty about it.

It was interesting to note that none of the men made statements of this nature about their families. It can also be said that the frequency of conflict rises with male and female managers having children. This may be related to the reported increases in incidents which deal with sending and picking up children from school, with spending time with them, and even with supervising their homework. More of the married women indicated conflicts arising from the nature of their husbands' jobs:

He works late and often brings work home on weekends. When I bring up the issue of insufficient time spent with the children, we have a row.

He works in the provinces and I am left alone to raise two children. Is this fair?

Money isn't everything. We can earn lots of it later. It's not spending this important time with our children that I regret.

Surprisingly, none of the sample of male managers commented on conflicts arising from their wives' jobs or from the time they spent at work. This could be because women, despite being busy at the office, tried their best to make sufficient time for home and family. A few women also commented on conflicts arising from the expectations of 'in-laws'. For women hard-pressed for time to look after their children, it seems logical that their sensitivity to their in-laws problems seems higher than men's because more pressure is put on women through demands from parental families.

In terms of solutions for resolving conflicts, the women showed slightly different patterns from the men. The most frequently reported way of resolving conflicts is by 'rational discussion'. The large majority of women compared to only a third of the male sample employed this strategy. More men than women favoured the strategy of 'compromise', i.e., one party adjusts one time, the other the next'. Women seemed not to favour this 'temporary' measure; less than 10 per cent reported this as a solution. What appeared to be of utmost significance is the women's acceptance of their own jobs as less important and their readiness to reduce some of the time spent at their places of work. While less than 5 per cent of the men indicated this as a solution, almost half the sample of women managers reported that they were willing to work more effectively, delegate some portion of their tasks, move organizations so they could be closer to home and even reject promotions in order to have enough time to spend with their families. For roughly one-fifth of the sample, there appeared to be no resolution for conflict. Both sexes reported conflicts as inevitable and felt that as long as they were coping on a daily basis, there was no necessity to search for solutions.



## **Discussion**

The pressure on Thai women to conform to the pattern of 'ideal wife and mother' puts considerable pressure on them and despite a large proportion among them having full-time household help, women are still primarily responsible for many household and childcare activities. There is thus a contrast between Thai male and female managers in the division of household tasks similar to that cited in the Western literature on women managers. It is not just the pressure to conform to social expectations that places a heavy burden on women, it is also their reluctance to ask or expect assistance from their spouses in sharing tasks. The consequence of not asking for help results in women managers having 2.2 hours less per week for leisure activities than male managers, and from the questionnaire responses, it was evident that even the few hours which were considered their leisure time were interrupted by various childcare and home tasks. The data also shows that women managers with young children, employed in private firms, who live in nuclear families, have no regular domestic help and whose husbands are also employed in private firms, are those who have the least amount of leisure time and also suffer the most in terms of conflict between home and work responsibilities.

## **CAREER PROGRESS AND BARRIERS**

In this section, the sample was questioned about barriers that prevented their upward mobility. Information related to motivating factors, the role and support of mentors,

training, the exercise of authority, and management styles was obtained and organized under the three perspectives cited in Chapter IV, i.e., gender-centred, organizational structure and organizational processes.

## **GENDER-CENTRED BARRIERS**

As mentioned earlier, the basic argument for this approach is that gender, whether due to biological roots or socialization influences, determines many, if not most of one's preferences, abilities, and skills, and that these characteristics drive behaviours. According to this perspective therefore, women are believed less likely to possess the attributes needed for management. Let us examine how the sample of Thai male and female managers compared in terms of the variables underlying this barrier.

### **Motivators**

It is usually assumed that there are major gender differences in motivation to work. For instance, the studies cited in the literature show that women managers are more likely than men to be job rather than career-orientated, concerned with the intrinsic rewards of the task at hand rather than with future career benefits. This was evident among the sample of Thai managers. (See Table 6.1). Three items, i.e., respect from others, free time, and fear of failure were rated quite similarly by women and men. Women rated nearly all the intrinsic factors as more important than men. Among these were a challenging job, opportunity for development, meeting targets/deadlines, sense of achievement and autonomy. Men, on the other hand, were more concerned with extrinsic factors to the job such as financial reward, status promotion, fringe benefits,



enjoying a sense of authority and job security. (See Table 6.2). Perhaps women managers in Thailand tend to emphasize financial rewards less than men because the large majority were married to men who held higher-paying jobs than themselves and hence they were not very concerned with the security their own jobs had to offer. What seems interesting is the difference in the way Thai women and men rate autonomy. It could be that Thai women's higher qualifications while at the same time, their relative inability to exercise equivalent amount of authority as compared to men, has caused them to rate this factor much higher than men, on the given list of motivators.

Comparisons were also made by gender and sector of employment. Both males and females in the public sector were more concerned with job security and free time whilst both men and women managers in the private sector regarded intrinsic benefits as more important. This confirms what is a common belief in Thailand that the appeal of a government job lies in its regularity of schedule and the security of job tenure.

### **Styles Of Management**

As stated in the literature, male and female managers are perceived as having quite different behavioural styles, with men supposedly more focused on competition, winning and domination. Men are also said to take more risks, to be better team players and to be independent, assertive, opportunistic and impersonal than women in their work relations (Hennig and Jardim, 1977; Stratham, 1987). Women managers are viewed as being better at giving information, strengthening interpersonal relations,

being receptive to ideas and encouraging effort and subordinate development (Baird Jr et al, 1979). However there appeared to be no differences in the styles employed by the current sample. Both men and women in the sample indicated that they employed a more interactive style rather than the traditional command and control style, which the literature reveals, is more likely to be employed by male managers.

### **Other gender-related barriers**

Managers were given a list of barriers which commonly affected Western managers' progress and asked to cite the most important ones that hindered them in their present jobs. The idea was to gauge whether women on the whole, were experiencing more barriers because of their gender, rather than those that arose from other aspects of their jobs. Approximately 14 per cent of both sexes said they had not encountered any of the listed barriers. Of those who had experienced barriers, the three most commonly cited by both males and females were lack of facilities (equipment and office space), inadequate encouragement from top management and lack of training. It is quite surprising that none of the three cited above, were directly related to gender.

What was most surprising was that more men perceived barriers which are generally thought to affect women because of their gender. Factors such as family commitments, prejudice of colleagues and lack of self confidence/motivation were perceived as greater barriers by men rather than women. More women than men perceived lack of childcare facilities, lack of training and lack of facilities in the workplace as obstacles to their progress. Interestingly, the biggest single barrier to the progress of British



women managers, i.e., the existence of the men's club network, was not seen as such by Thai managers; only 12 per cent of men and 18 per cent of women reported this factor as a barrier. (See Chart 6.14.)

In their open-ended responses however, women managers reported more gender-related barriers than men. Whilst a large proportion of Thai male managers indicated work overload, long working hours, and staff and equipment shortages, Thai women, reported problems with having to perform better at their jobs compared to their male colleagues, lack of credibility in the eyes of their male colleagues and subordinates and pressure stemming from having limited leadership authority.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE BARRIERS**

The basic argument in this perspective was that observable differences in managerial behaviour for men and women were not so much the results of socialization as situational differences in the workplace. It also argued that the way women manage at work may be due to features of the organization. In this study, the role of mentors and sex differences in decision-making authority were examined.

### **Mentors**

As mentioned in the literature, a mentor or sponsor who guides one's career through early adulthood is almost essential to success. It is therefore possible that mentors may be influential on both male and female managers' development of leadership style.

Overall, the study showed that male managers were more likely to have had mentors throughout their careers. These mentors were not just their direct bosses but also senior managers in other departments as well as divisional heads. More women (58 per cent) than men (46 per cent) indicated that they had been mentored by their direct male superiors. This was strongest among women in private firms. More women had served as mentors to other women in public sector enterprises. This could happen because certain ministries and government enterprises, especially those chosen for the current study, had a large number of women employed as managers, whereas it is still relatively difficult to find adequate role models for women in private firms because of the lack of women in senior positions. Approximately 17 per cent of the male and 19.4 per cent of the female managers had not been in a mentoring relationship in their careers. This is not unusual if one considers the fact that specific preparation and training for the mentoring process as well as the potential benefits that mentors bring to organizations have not, unlike the West, been acknowledged by the majority of Thai firms.

### **Sex Differences In Decision Making Authority**

Another area in which there was a marked sex difference is in the number of people for whom the respondents were directly responsible. Over three-quarters of women (86 per cent) managed fewer than ten subordinates, whereas this was true for only 29 per cent of the men. Only 9 per cent of women managers managed more than 50 employees whereas over a quarter of male managers managed a span of 50-75



subordinates. Hence, it can be concluded that spans of management are generally larger for Thai men than they are for Thai women.

The sexes differed both in the number of arenas in which they were involved in decision making and in whether their involvement was to provide information, recommend actions or make decisions. (See Chart 6.15). There was only one arena in which women made more final decisions than men, in the rest of the arenas, the men were dominant, and in some, the differences were quite large. Men's advantage over women was largest in decisions relating to personnel. For example in the matter of hiring subordinates, 73.6 per cent of men and 58.1 per cent of women had the last word. In terms of firing subordinates, 72 per cent of men and 68.6 per cent of women said they had authority to make the final decision. The sexes differed least on the matter of deciding the size of the budget, in fact, women had a slight advantage (65.2 per cent for women against 61.7 per cent for men). Yet when it came to deciding how the department/division budget was to be spent, there was a difference in favour of men, 61.6 per cent of men had the final say as compared with only 52.1 per cent of the women. Overall, therefore the authority gap was greatest for decisions of hiring, firing and authorizing promotions for subordinates. Men were at a slight advantage in all arenas in the private sector whereas in the public sector, women appear to have higher authority to make the final decision in terms of deciding their department/division budgets than their male colleagues.

These findings indicate sex differences in organizational power. Attaining a middle-management position in the hierarchy more often brings men than women the right to

make decisions. In the organizational structure perspective, Kanter(1977) argued that that the positions women occupy are vested with very little power. Considering the fact that Thai women had better educational qualifications as well as equivalent amounts of job experience, the authority gap does not arise as a consequence of these two variables. What could be a possible cause then is organizations' failure to entrust female managers with as much power as they give equally or less qualified men in similar jobs.

## **ORGANIZATION PROCESSES BARRIERS**

The basic argument of this perspective was that organizational policies and practices affect the treatment of women and also their opportunities for advancement. In this study, no questions on HR policies were asked of the sample because it was thought that these could be better explored during interviews with women and HR/Line managers. However managers were questioned about their training/self development opportunities, on how they saw their careers progress over the next 3-5 years, their attitudes towards working with managers and subordinates of the opposite sex, and issues related to equality in pay and promotion. It was felt that their responses to these three variables would reflect the ways in which women were treated in organizations, and indicate signs of systematic discrimination against them.



## **Training/Self-Development Courses**

While human capital theory emphasizes women's supposed lack of qualifications, studies have found that Thai women are generally better qualified in formal terms for equivalent jobs. With regard to the related issue of training however, it appears that many organizations in Thailand do not invest in training women at the same level as men. When asked the question, 'has your employer ever financed training/courses that you have proposed for your self-development?', 58.6 per cent of women offered negative responses compared to only 38 per cent of men. This lack of training was more evident among women in public sector enterprises, 70.4 per cent of whom indicated that they had no access to training/courses which were self-proposed. Women managers in MNCs were offered better chances for similar training, almost the same percentage of managers of both sexes (64 per cent male, 63.5 per cent female) indicated that they had access to a self-development course that they had proposed. (See Chart 6.13).

## **Career Progression**

In response to the question on how managers anticipated their career development within the next 3 to 5 years, women managers seemed less optimistic about their prospects for promotion within their own organizations (43 per cent) as compared to their male counterparts (56 per cent). On the open-ended part of the question, they gave reasons such as 'I am not suitable enough'; 'there are no women in higher levels in my company'; 'I am not sure if I will ever get promoted if I to continue to work for this firm' and 'there are others more senior than myself who deserve a promotion'. The

pessimistic view on their promotion was most evident among women in public sector organizations. Nevertheless, when it came to being promoted in another organization, women anticipated their chances far better than men (22.8 per cent versus 15 per cent). It was mainly women in the private sector who indicated their desire for mobility between organizations. Slightly more men than women (7.5 per cent versus 5.2 per cent) indicated that they would quit their present firms to set up their own businesses. This could be explained by the older age profile of male managers and also by the fact that the age at which Thai males seem to be opening their own businesses is falling. In the current sample, a mere 5.2 per cent of male and female managers were anticipating retiring in the next 3-5 years, reflecting the younger age profile of Thai middle managers. (See Chart 6.16).

### **Attitudes towards having managers and subordinates of the opposite sex**

In the literature on women in management (Chapter IV), it was reported that male managers as well as both, male and female subordinates see having a female boss as 'problematic'. In answer to the questions on preferences for male or female managers as colleagues in this study, the majority of both sexes said that they were more concerned about performance and less about the gender of their colleagues. Yet when the sample was asked 'Do you prefer to work for managers of your own sex?', 2 per cent of male and 12 per cent of female managers indicated that they did not want to work for managers of their own sex. Thirty five per cent of males and a mere 8.3 per cent of females indicated they wanted to work for a manager of their own sex. This was more evident among women managers in private firms. (See Chart 6.17).



Although the overall majority of both sexes indicate that gender is unimportant, the fact that 12 per cent of women did not want a female boss implies that among Thai women there is still the stereotype of women managers having less job competencies than men. Also the fact that just over half the sample of Thai men indicated that gender made no difference can also point to the conclusion that there is still the perception among Thai men that managerial jobs ought to be occupied by men. These stereotypes could very well affect the way women are recruited, selected and promoted in Thai organizations.

When it came to the question of gender preferences of subordinates, over 80 per cent of male and female managers expressed no preference. However in analyzing the breakdown by sector, it was found that a quarter of the male manager in the public sector preferred males over female subordinates. This was interesting considering the fact that the five ministries which were chosen for the sample were all female-dominated. (See Chart 6.18).

### **Are men and women treated equally in organizations?**

Male and female managers' response to the question 'How would you rate your firm overall as a place for women to work?' differed slightly. More women (20.1 per cent) than men (15.1 per cent) thought their firm was an 'excellent' place for women to work. Moreover, 47.2 per cent of women rated their workplaces as 'pretty good' as compared with 39 per cent of men. A quarter of the sample of women and 32.2 per cent of males rated their workplaces as 'fair'. Interestingly, an overall positive rating

for the workplace was accorded by more women and men in private firms than those in public enterprises. Male managers overall, rated their firms as 'poor' places for women to work in, much more than women themselves, and this negative perception was shared among male managers in both sectors. Overall, 9.6 per cent of male managers indicated a 'poor' response against a mere 3.3 per cent of the women. While 6.5 per cent men and 0.7 per cent of the women in private firms thought their workplaces were 'poor' places for women to work, 18.4 per cent men and 8.7 per cent of women in public enterprises rated their firms as 'poor' places for women. (See Chart 6.19). Given that public sector organizations have the highest ratings as 'poor' places for women to work in is quite alarming, if one considers the large numbers of women who spend their entire careers in these organizations. To say that public sector organizations are more sympathetic to women managers and can be held up as examples of good employment practice, would be incorrect judging from the responses in the study.

In response to the question 'would you say that women have the same chance as equally qualified men to be promoted to senior management?', almost 80 per cent of males and 63.7 per cent of females stated that women had similar opportunities. As in the previous question, the difference between the sectors was obvious. While the majority of both male and female managers in private firms responded that women had the same opportunities, 71.8 per cent men and a mere 46.3 per cent of females in the public sector responded in like fashion. Almost 20 per cent of women in public enterprises said that women did not have the same opportunities against a mere 9 per cent of women in private firms.



To the following question, 'If women were promoted to senior management in your firm, how would they be paid?', the majority of the sample (66.2 per cent male and 78.9 per cent female) believed that women would be paid the same salary as men, whilst 17.6 per cent of women and 11.6 per cent of men indicated that women would be paid a higher salary. Only 1.4 per cent of males and 2.9 per cent of female managers believed that women who were promoted to senior management would be paid a lower salary than men. There was no major difference in the responses of managers in the two sectors as far as this issue was concerned.

The next question asked 'If your firm had to choose between two equally qualified candidates; one male and one female, who do you think would be chosen?.' To this question, the large majority of both men and women responded with 'not sure', (possibly due to insufficient data on which to base their responses). However, 21.8 per cent of men and 19.3 per cent of women thought that a man would be chosen, with a mere 2.4 per cent of males and 4.2 per cent of females believing that a woman would be chosen. Interestingly, none of the males in the public sector thought that a woman would be chosen.

### **Strategies Women should employ in their role as managers**

The statements on this section were enlisted to explore the attitudinal differences male and female managers had in terms of the strategies women should employ in their role as managers. In answer to the statement: 'Women executives should not openly

compete with men, but do a good job and expect equal recognition and promotion', an equal proportion of men (86.3 per cent) and women (86.8 per cent) said they disagreed. This might indicate that Thai managers see women as equal partners, competing for the same jobs.

To the second statement 'Women should build up networks with other women to help each other', 65.5 of Thai males and 77.9 per cent of females agreed. It could be that the 34.5 per cent of Thai male managers who disagreed did not see the importance of networking with other women as a factor that could help build the careers of female managers.

In response to the third statement 'Women should demand that their firms have specific policies for hiring and promotion of women executives', 62.1 per cent of Thai men and 72 per cent of women agreed. The higher proportion of women who indicated agreement could imply that women may be seeking such policies as a form for security for themselves and their careers given the absence of equal opportunity legislation in Thailand.

In answer to the final statement: 'Women should take legal action including filing lawsuits when they see evidence of discrimination', the large majority of Thai managers, 81.8 per cent men and 83.1 per cent women, agreed. As the literature revealed, in Thailand, women have been both culturally and legally subordinate to men. Even though women's position has recently improved because of amendments to certain legal provisions, there remain a large number of provisions which are



discriminatory against women. Moreover, none of these discriminatory provisions have ever been contested upon as unconstitutional. That both male and female managers in the two sectors assigned such a high agreement score to the above statement indicates that they were aware of the attitudes and prejudices of society regarding female roles and their employment. A statement frequently noted on the open-ended section of this question, mainly by women was that the Thai government needs to consider the implementation of some measure of equality legislation to outlaw the more blatant forms of sex discrimination commonly practised.

In conclusion, there is not much difference in the views of Thai men and women managers in relation to all four statements, both being in support of women's need to assert their authority and seek justice in the workplace. (See Chart 6.20).

## **Discussion**

**Gender-centred perspective:** The study showed negligible differences in the socio-demographic characteristics of Thai male and female managers. Women managers work the same hours as men. They show equal commitment and motivation to work as men. In fact, women rated all the factors concerned with the quality of their work (challenge, responsibility, achievement) more highly than men who tended to assign higher ratings to extrinsic factors (pay, fringe benefits etc.) In fact, male managers appeared to face barriers such as family commitments, prejudice of colleagues, lack of self-confidence, etc., which the proponents of this perspective believe are common among women. Based on this, we cannot explain women's career barriers in terms of

their individual characteristics. It would also not be incorrect to conclude that from the gender-centred perspective, Thai women represent an equal, or even better organizational investment than male managers.

**Organizational Structure Barriers:** The findings suggest that greater barriers for women arise from both the structure and processes of the organizations in which they are employed. For instance, most female managers have male bosses and are likely to have female rather than male staff. They also have smaller spans of management and less authority than men. Whilst it is true that Thai female managers are not in traditionally 'female' functions as in the West, they still have to accept the fact that men have the more influential and controlling positions. Considering that women had equal or better educational qualifications and were still offered less training and decision-making opportunities than men, it is not surprising why their responses show that they are less optimistic for promotion in their present organizations.

**Organizational Processes:** If one considers age, education and experience as the three factors that influence earnings, each had a greater impact on male rather than female earnings in the study. Women also received less training than men. The lack of opportunities to develop broader business skills was often cited by female managers as a factor affecting their promotion prospects. Overall, the data suggests that women have to wait longer than males, and work twice as hard, in order to obtain a promotion from middle to senior management level. What is quite surprising though is the lack of significant sex differences in respondents' overall attitudes towards equality for women (questions relating to gender preferences, pay, promotion, and the strategies



for equality). If one considers the actual situation of Thai women, it is obvious that women have a long way to go before they can be really equal to men. This suggests one of two things. Either male respondents have marked their responses according to the what 'should/ought' (socially acceptable responses) rather than what actually 'is' going on in the workplace, or that the opportunities to work with highly qualified women have succeeded in modifying male views on women in the workplace.

## **SUMMARY**

The major similarities and differences between Thai male and female managers, are enumerated as follows

### **What differences exist in the socio-demographic characteristics of Thai male and female managers in the two sectors?**

- Women managers overall, are more likely to be slightly younger than male managers, and both male and female managers in the public sector are more likely to be older than their counterparts in the private sector.
- There is no major difference in marital status between Thai male and female managers (the majority are married); neither is there a difference in the number of children for married Thai male and female managers (two children, on average).
- More Thai women managers hold Bachelor degrees but Thai male managers outnumber women in terms of postgraduate qualifications. Over a quarter of the sample of male and female managers in the private sector hold a Masters in Business Administration (MBA) as against only 10 per cent of the sample of male and female managers in the public sector.
- Managers of both sexes had spouses who were in full-time employment. Nevertheless, while the majority of female managers were married to businessmen and professionals, half of the sample of male managers were married to women who were in non-managerial jobs.

- There is only a slight difference in the ethnic background of male and female managers in the two sectors; more managers in the private sector had parents of Chinese origin as compared with their counterparts in the public sector. The majority of managers in both sectors were of middle-class background. Only 7.3 per cent of all managers were first-born.
- Thai female managers in private firms were concentrated in the functional areas of marketing and finance/accounting whereas their male counterparts are more likely to be in marketing and production/operations management. Overall, women managers, especially those in the public sector were clustered in support activities whereas male managers specialized in line activities.
- Although there was no major difference between male and female managers in the higher income brackets, 8.4 per cent more female managers were clustered in the lower income bracket of Baht 250,000 - 300,000.
- There is not much of a gender difference in the number of hours worked but there is a noticeable difference in the number of hours worked between the two sectors. Managers of both sexes in private firms were four times more likely to work 60 hours or more as compared to their counterparts in the public sector.
- Women managers tend to stay longer in organizations than their male counterparts. The attrition rate for male managers was twice that of female managers. There was no significant gender difference in the age of first managerial appointment.
- Over three-quarters of the sample of both male and female managers had uninterrupted careers. Only 3.7 per cent of the sample of women managers had taken a break for childcare.

#### **What differences exist between male and female managers in the household division of labour?**

- Women managers spent a total of 44.6 hours per week on house and childcare as compared with only 36 for men. This difference occurred despite the fact that almost half the sample of women managers had full-time household help.
- More women than men reported conflict between work and family responsibilities. The methods of resolution of conflict was different, with women proposing 'rational discussion' and men 'compromise'. One-fifth of the sample did not perceive the necessity of conflict-reducing strategies, seeing conflicts in dual-career families as inevitable.

#### **What were the differences in the barriers male and female managers encountered in their jobs as managers?**

- Male and female managers do not experience the same types of barriers. Whilst men saw family commitments, prejudice of colleagues and lack of motivation as



greater barriers than women, women managers cited lack of adequate childcare, lack of training and lack of workplace facilities as greater barriers than men. On the whole, there were more barriers perceived by male and female managers in the public sector, as compared with those in private firms.

### **Gender-centred**

- Although there are certain broad similarities in the attributes of jobs favoured by men and women managers, there were nonetheless differences in the preferences expressed for many of the measures, with male managers favouring extrinsic factors (job context) over intrinsic factors (job content) and women, vice-versa.
- Neither male nor female Thai managers expressed a preference for a woman manager as a boss.
- There was no difference in the style of management employed by male and female managers. Both sexes said they used a person rather than task-orientated style.
- Women reported problems with their credibility as managers and having to work twice as hard for the same promotion as their male colleagues.

### **Organization structure**

- Thai women's growing share of management jobs has not brought about an equitable distribution of authority. Male managers were more likely to have their authority reflected in wider spans of management, and in greater number of decision making arenas than female managers.
- On the whole, male managers had more mentors than female managers. Female managers in private firms were more likely to be mentored by their male superiors. More women serve as mentors to other women in public sector organizations

### **Organization Processes**

- Women managers appeared less optimistic about their prospects for promotion within their own organizations but more optimistic when anticipating their chances for promotion within another organization than their male counterparts.
- Thai firms do not invest in training women at the same level as men. More than half of the sample of women, more so in the public sector, had no access to a self-development course that they had proposed.

The questionnaire used for collecting data for this chapter has helped uncover important issues in respect to demographics, careers and lifestyles of male and female managers. But it has not helped explain why, given that the situation is not negatively disposed towards women managers, do women make up only a quarter of all managers in Thailand? What specific problems, for instance, do women encounter in their jobs as managers? Or again what solutions do women managers apply when they come up against problems in balancing home and work responsibilities.

It is important to recognize that questionnaires as research instruments have their limitations, particularly in the country such as Thailand. One cannot ask or derive detailed information on every aspect, more so on issues which are sensitive. It is also not unusual for Thai respondents to skip a whole section of questions which they prefer not to answer (i.e., on their family lives or work environment) or to answer only check-mark type questions while leaving most of the open-ended type questions blank. Hence to obtain a realistic picture of the situation of women managers, and to answer the questions raised at the beginning of the study, it was necessary to obtain information through face to face meetings with the women themselves. The ensuing chapter which contains the findings of interviews with 67 women managers helps provide such a picture.



CHART 6.1

AGE

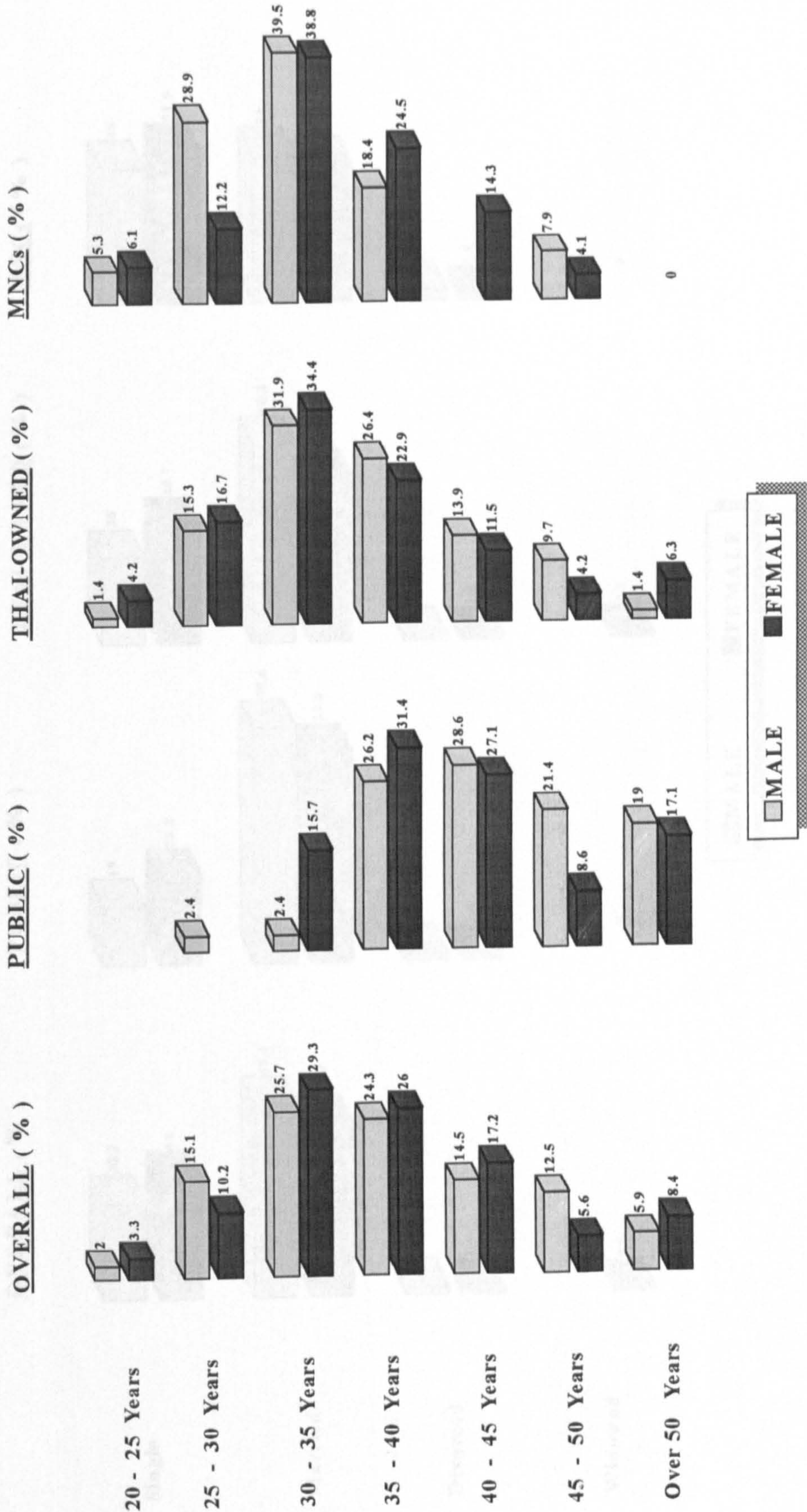




CHART 6.2

MARITAL STATUS

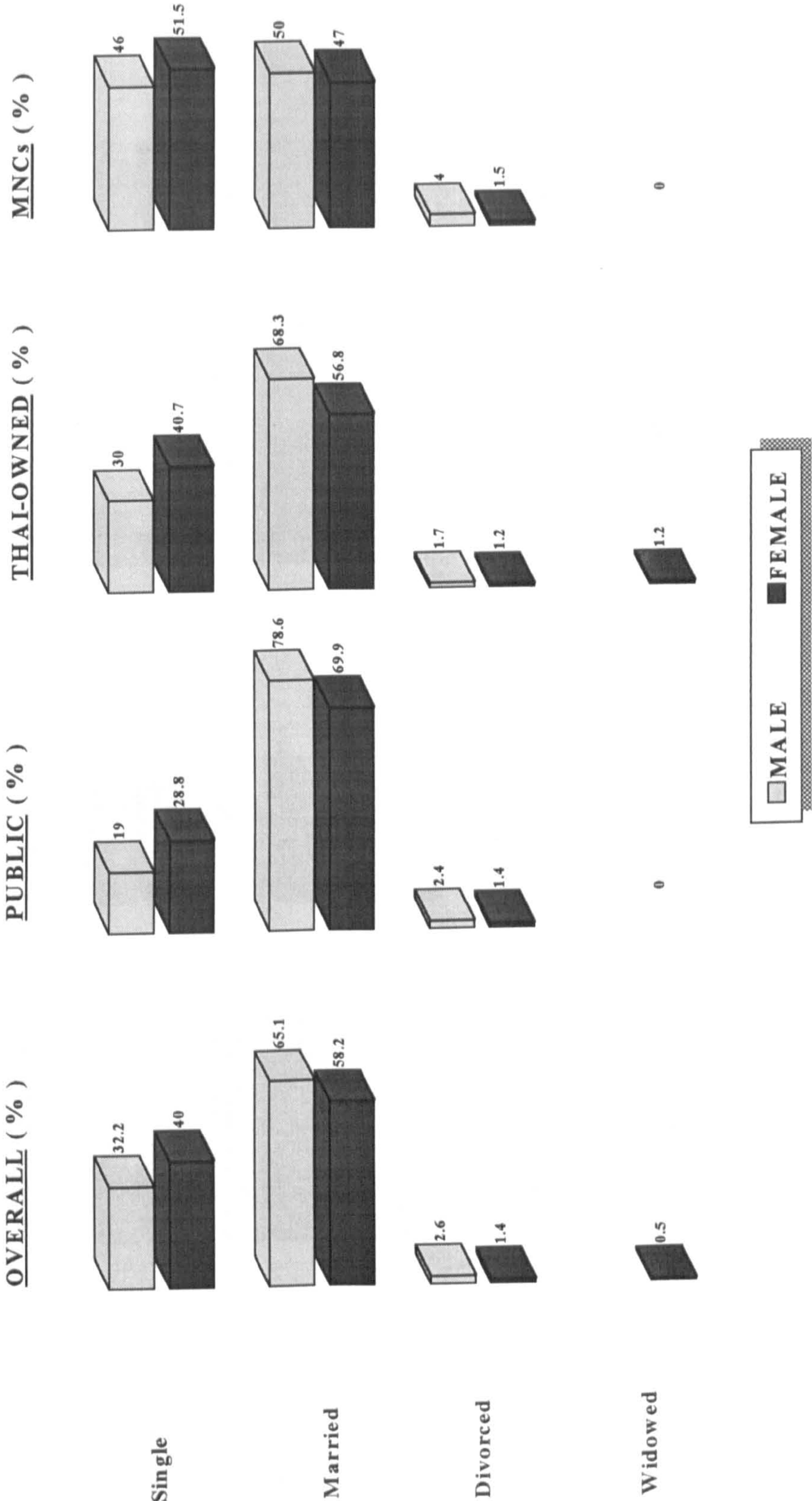




CHART 6.3

FIELD OF STUDY FOR BACHELORS DEGREE

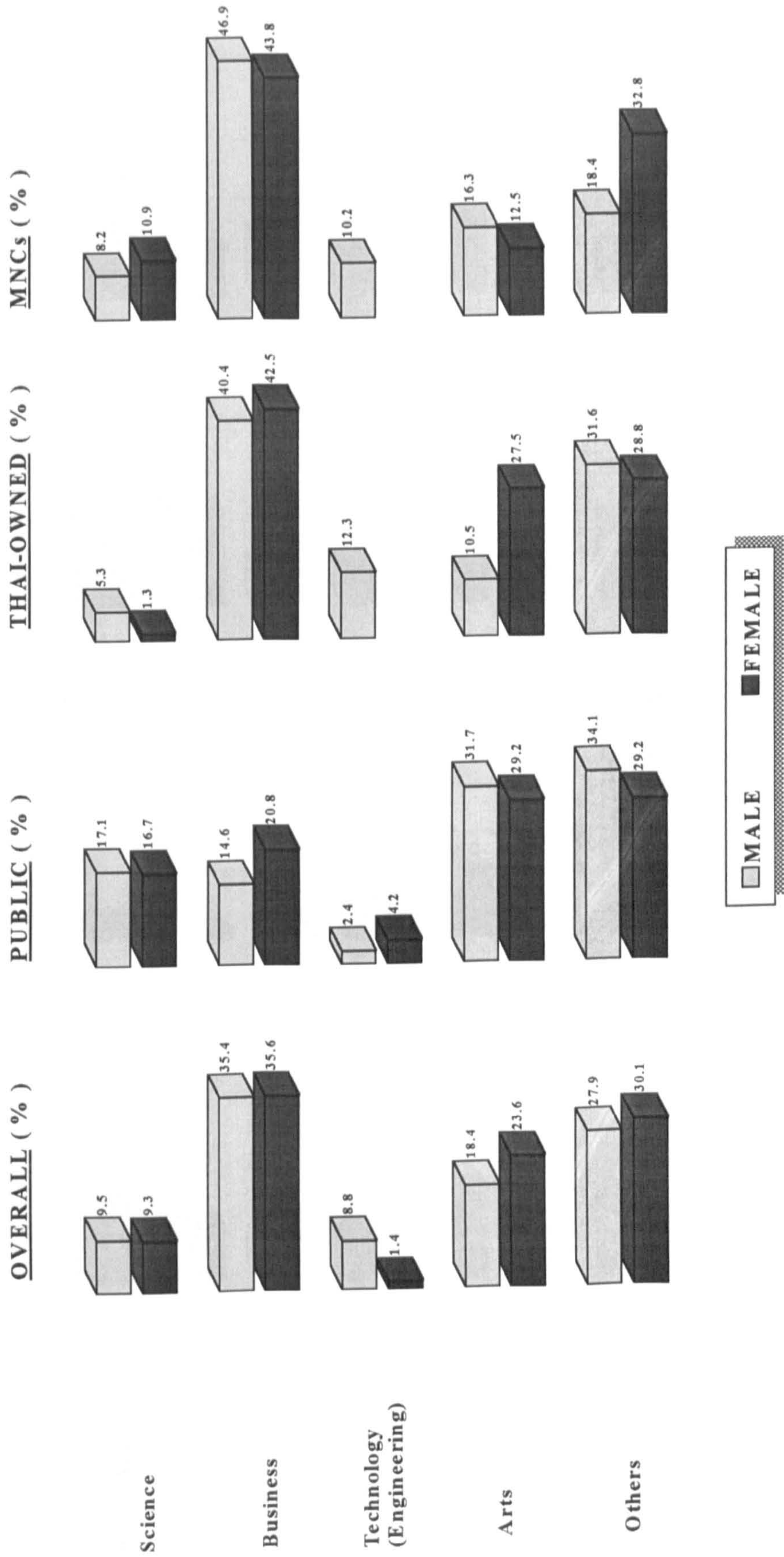


CHART 6.4  
LENGTH OF TIME IN PRESENT ORGANIZATION

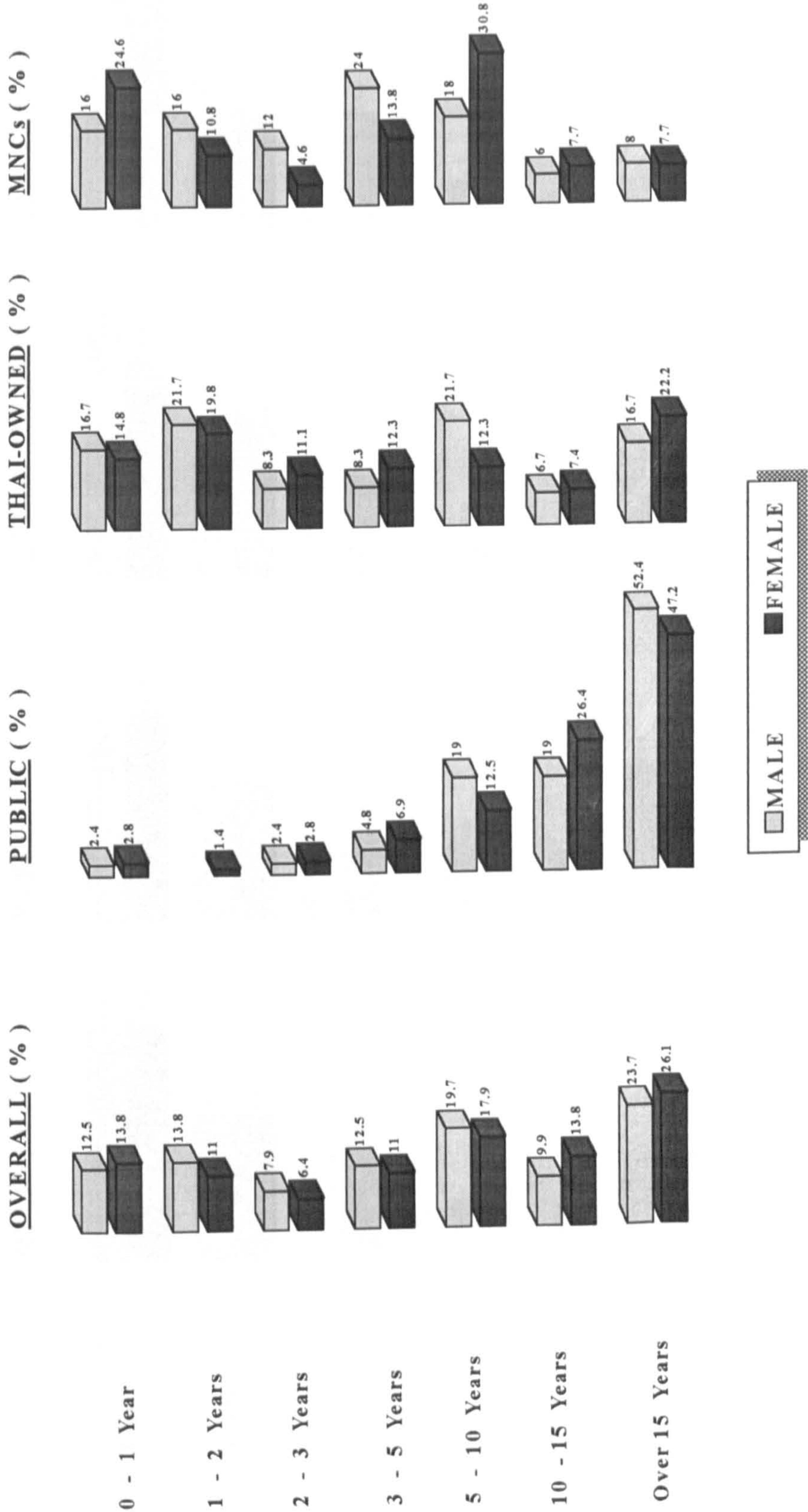




CHART 6.5

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN YOUR PRESENT POSITION ?

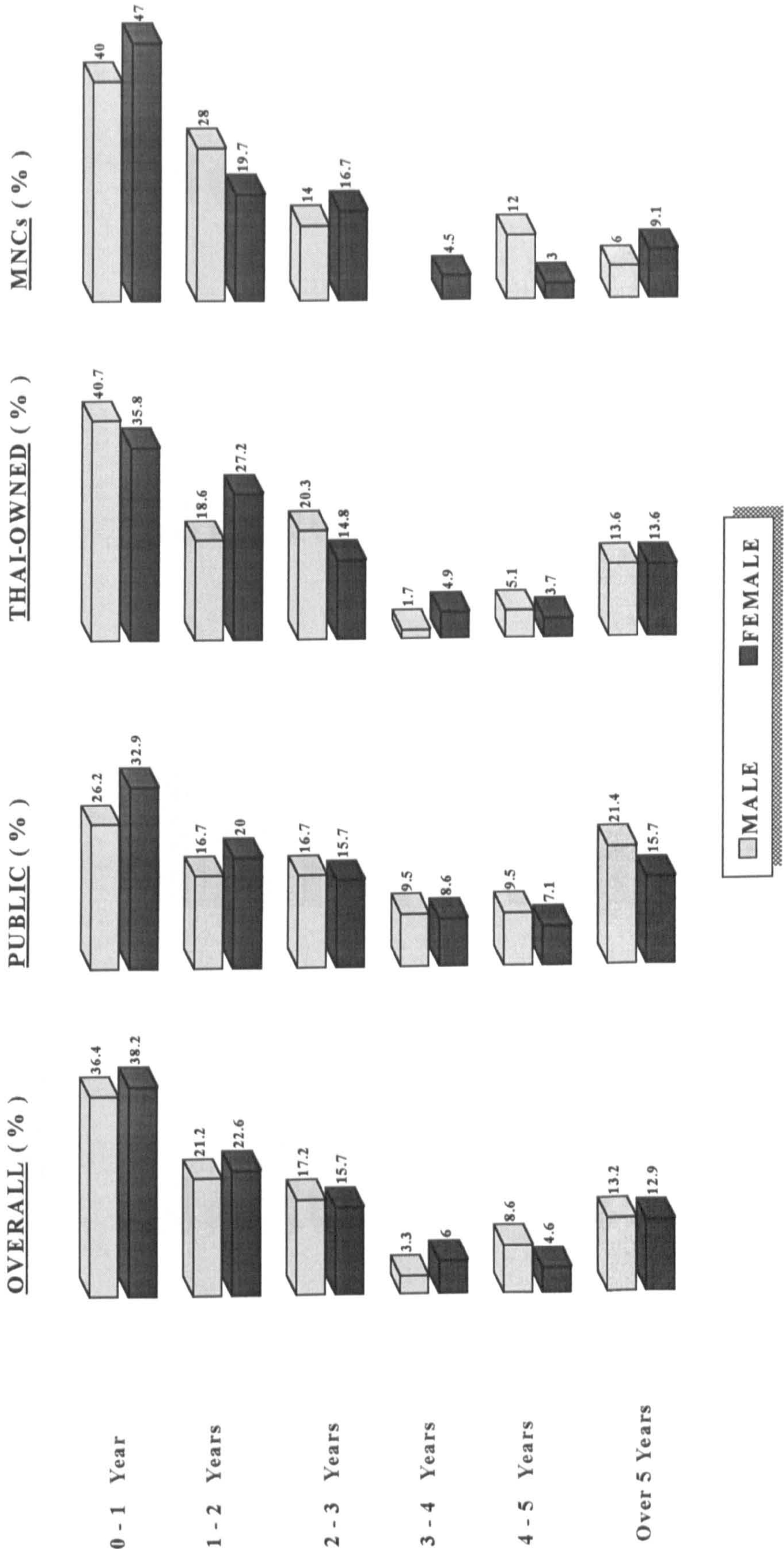


CHART 6.6

OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALIZATION

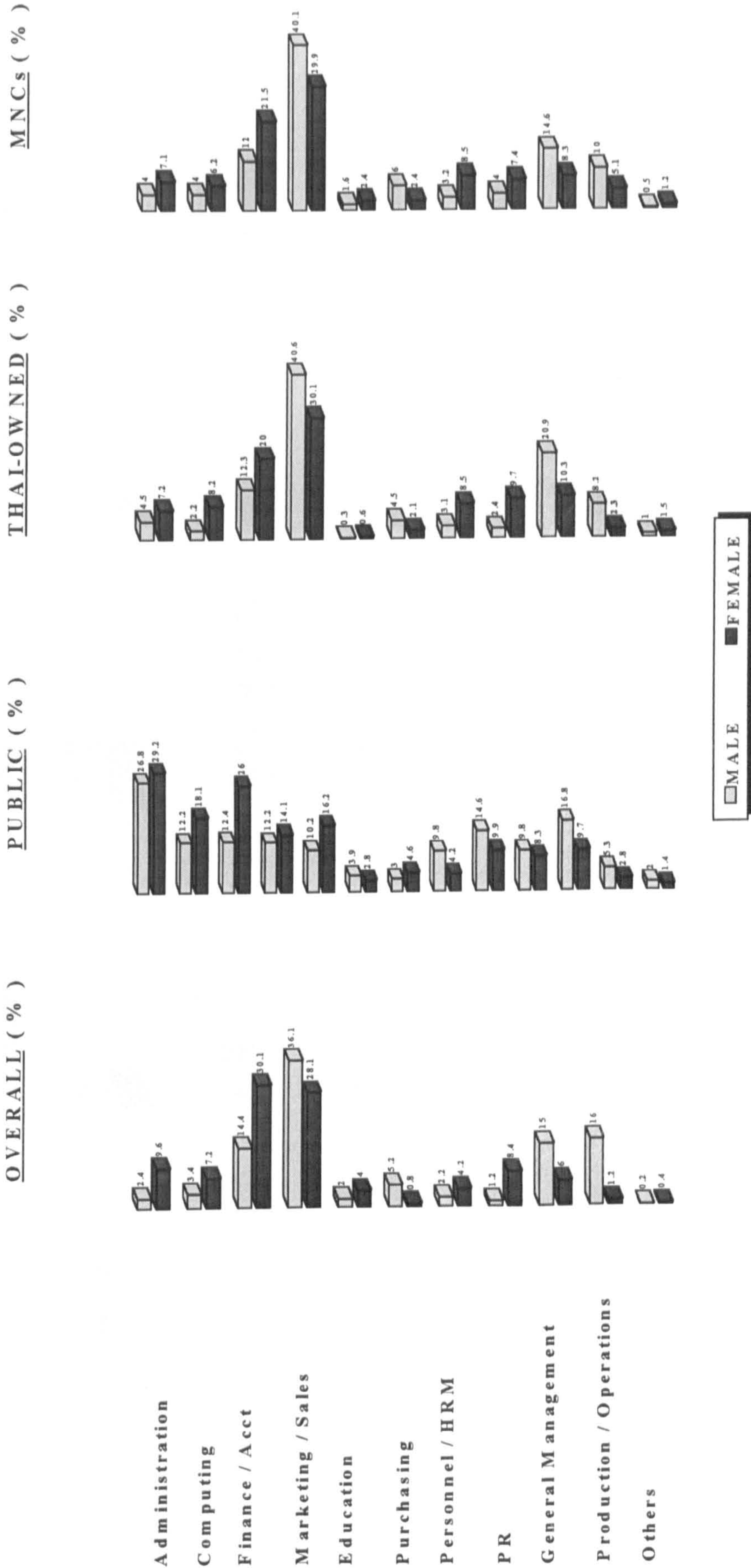




CHART 6.7  
HOURS WORKED PER WEEK

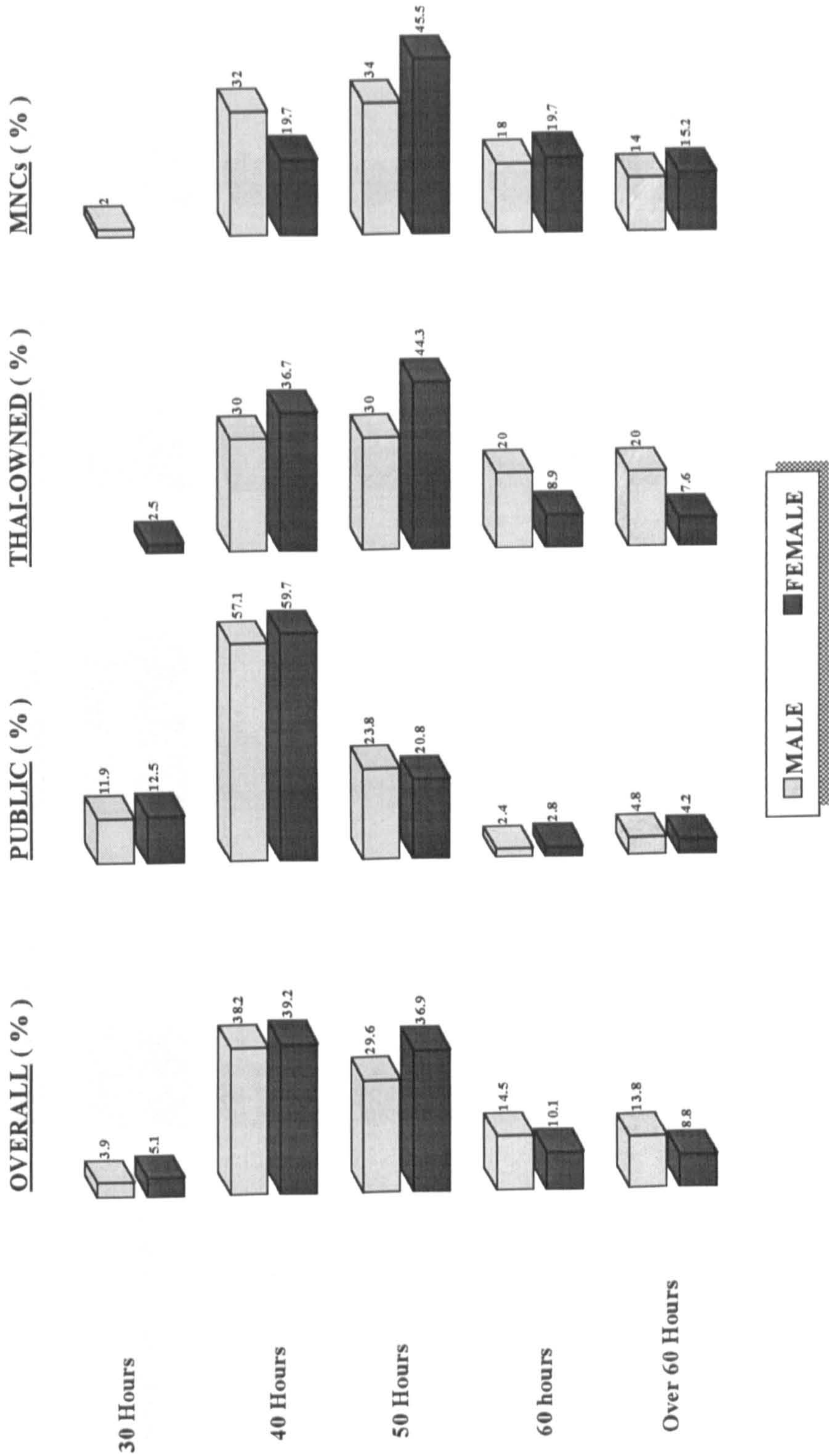


CHART 6.8  
PRESENT LEVEL OF GROSS ANNUAL REMUNERATION

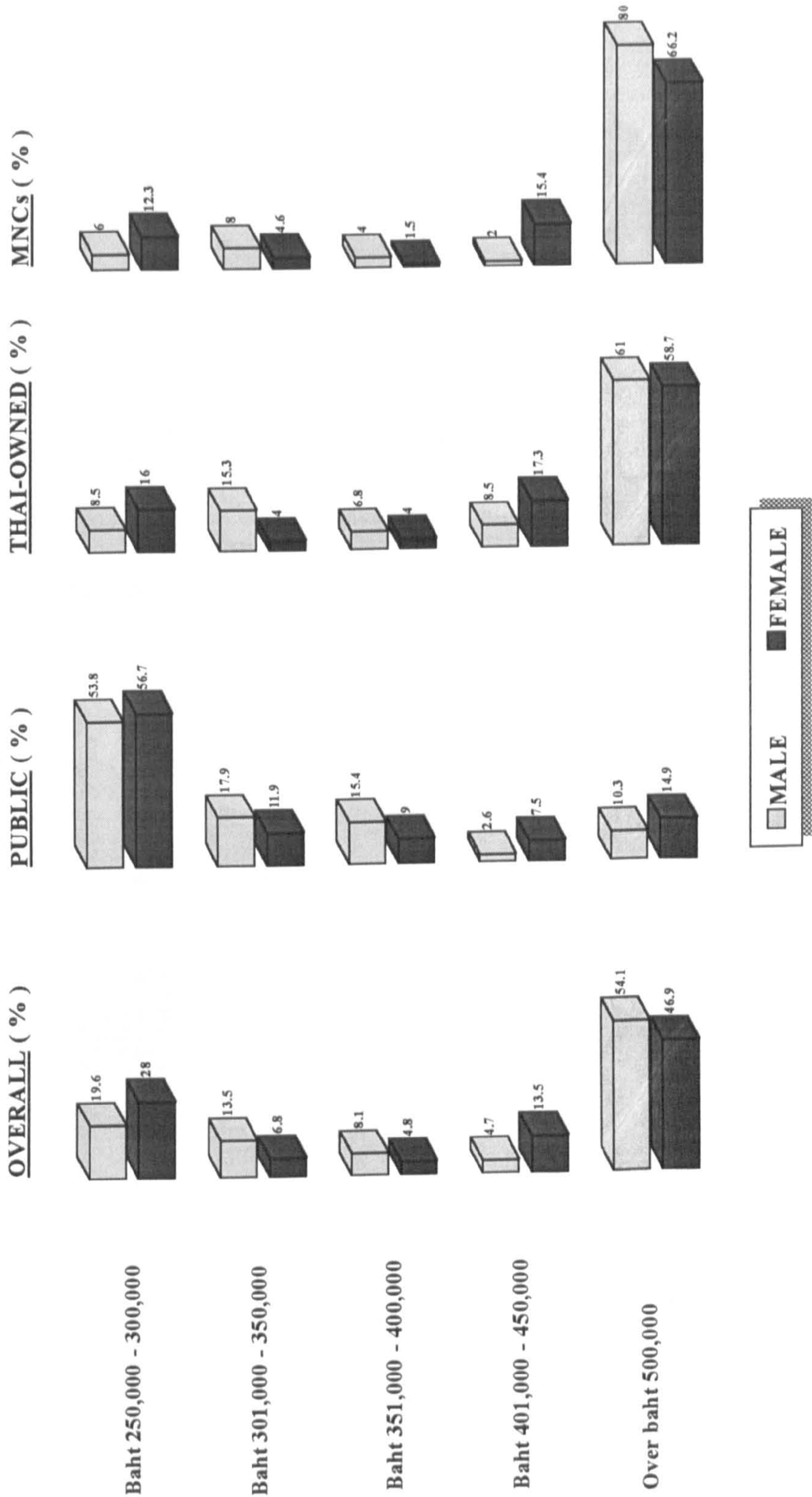




CHART 6.9

WHAT SORT OF HELP DO YOU HAVE IN THE HOUSEHOLD?

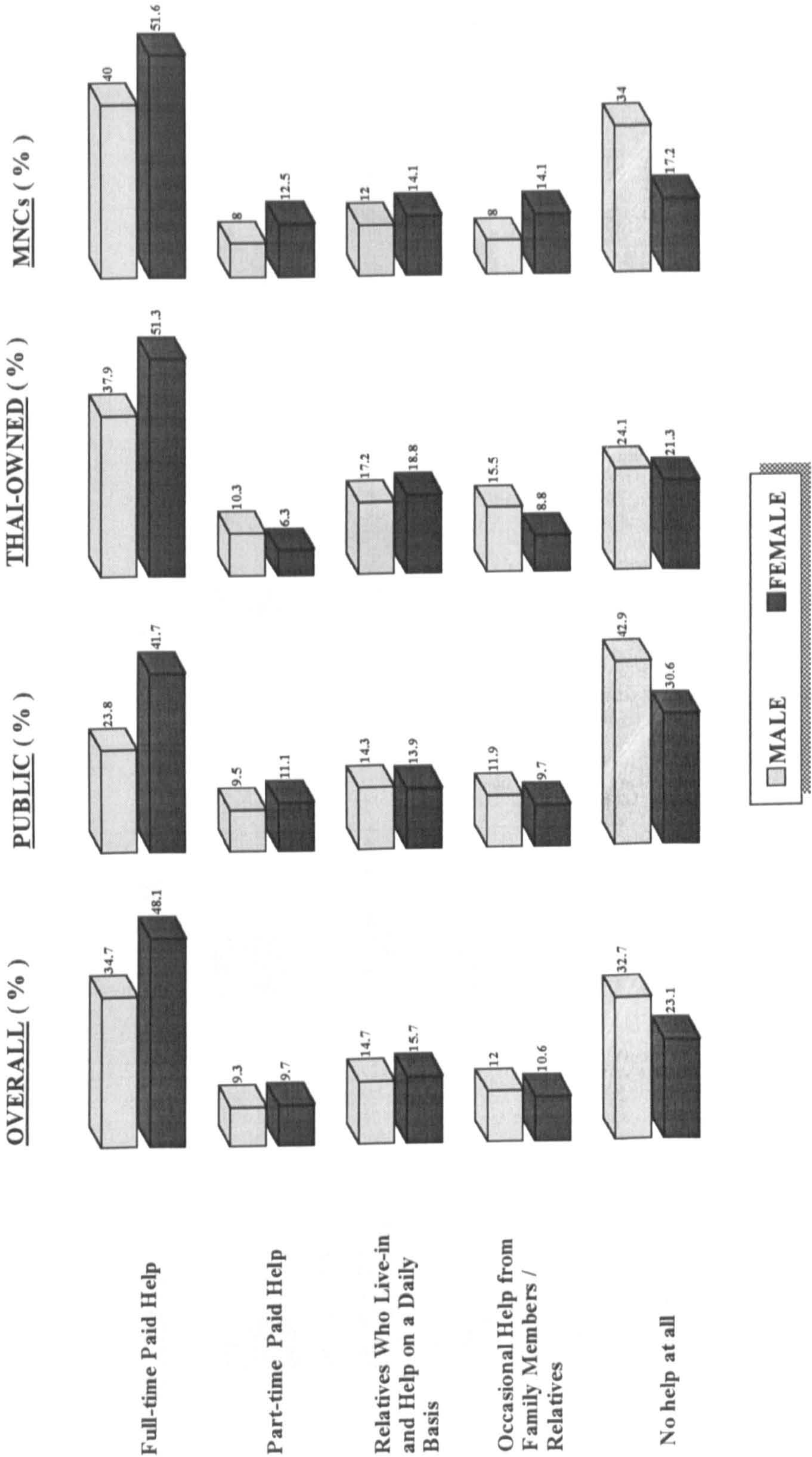


CHART 6.10

HOW MANY HOURS DO YOU SPEND ON THESE ACTIVITIES ?  
(IN HOURS PER WEEK)

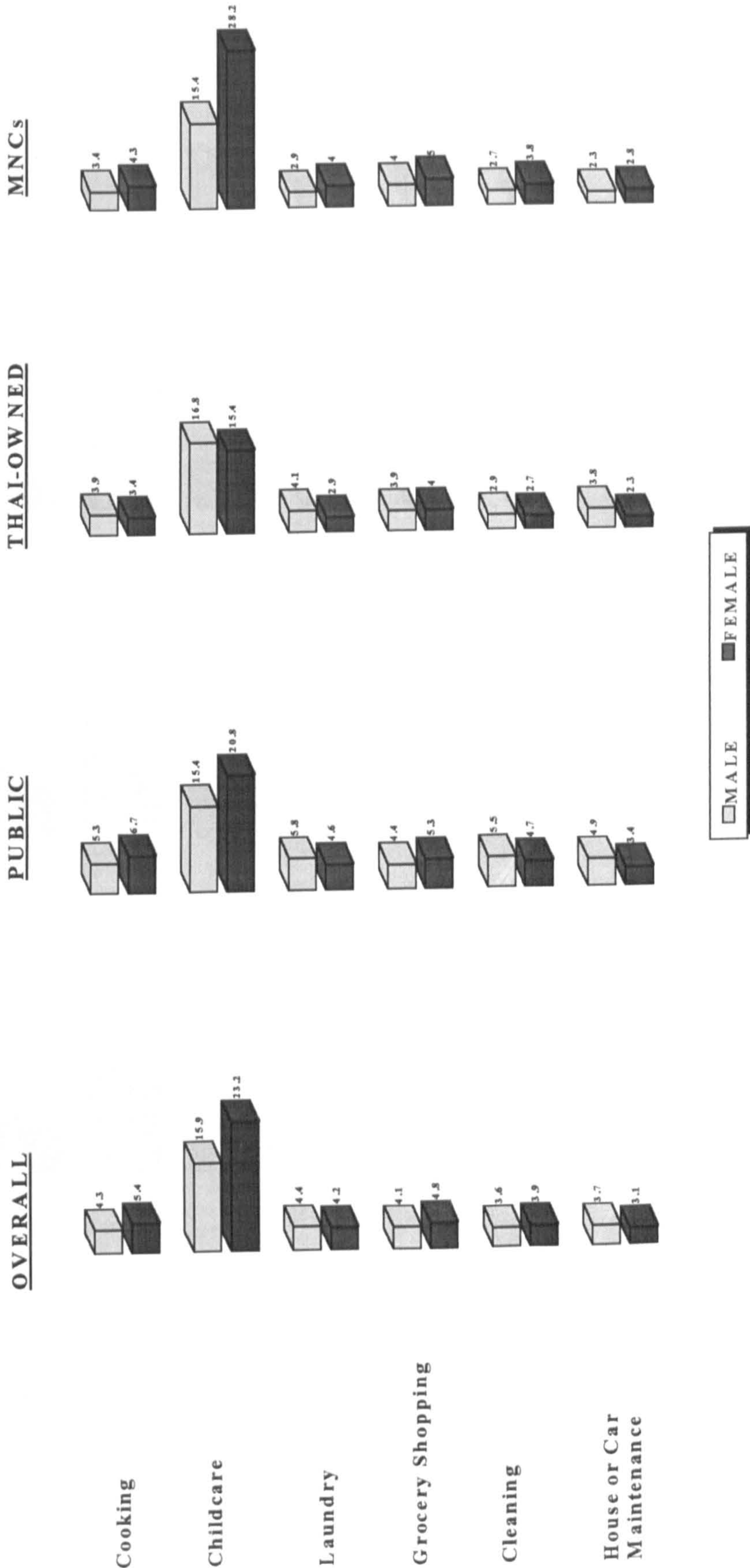




CHART 6.11

HOW MANY HOURS DOES YOUR SPOUSE SPEND ON THESE ACTIVITIES ?

(IN HOURS PER WEEK)

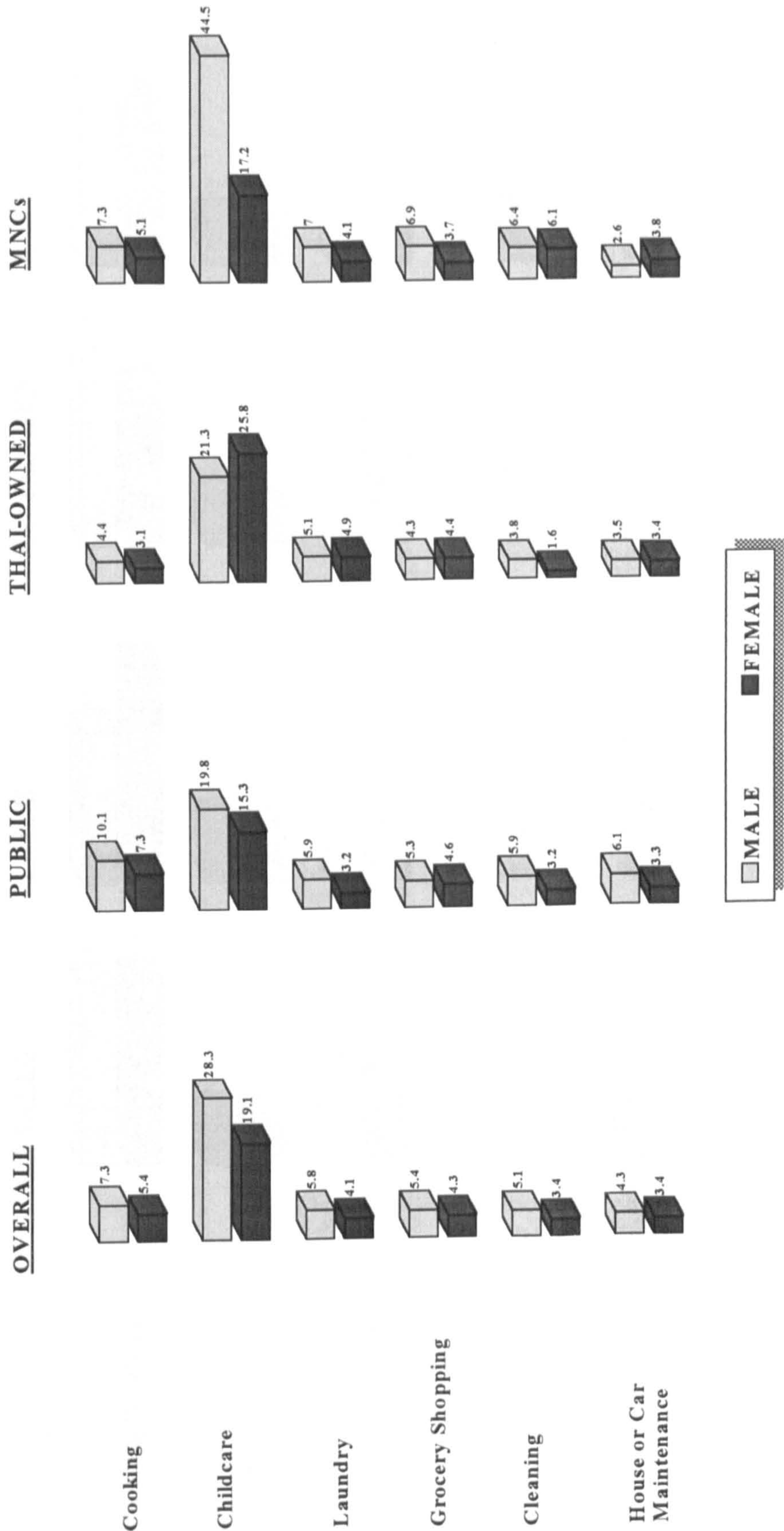


CHART 6.12  
LEISURE ACTIVITIES  
( IN HOURS PER WEEK )

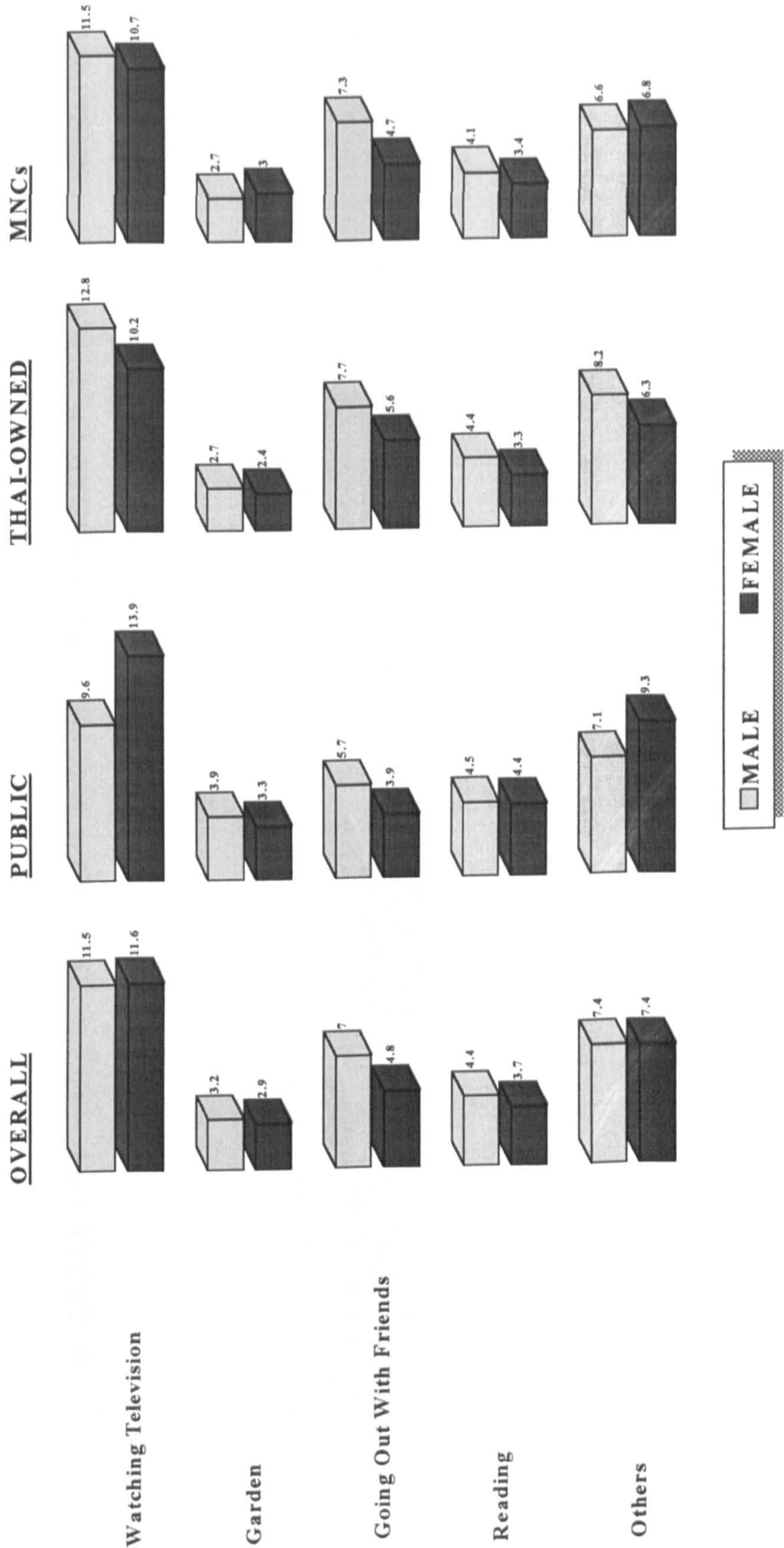
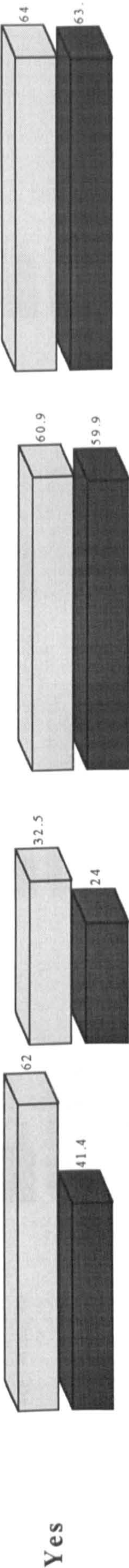




CHART 6.13  
HAS YOUR EMPLOYER EVER FINANCED TRAINING / A COURSE THAT YOU  
HAVE PROPOSED FOR YOUR SELF-DEVELOPMENT ?

OVERALL ( % )                      PUBLIC ( % )                      THAI-OWNED ( % )                      MNCs ( % )



MALE      FEMALE



CHART 6.14  
CAREER BARRIERS

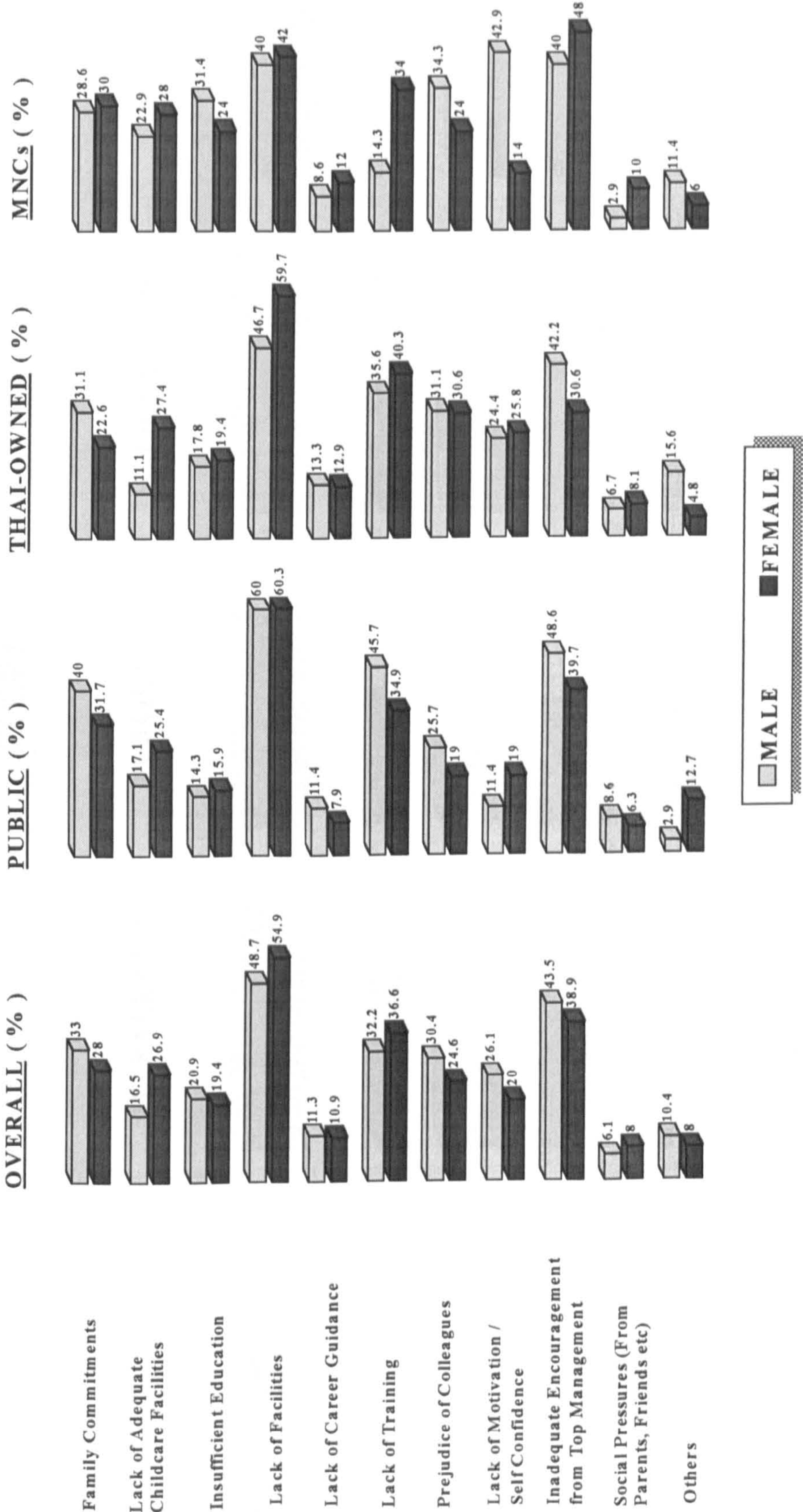




CHART 6.15

AUTHORITY TO MAKE THE FINAL DECISION  
(YES)

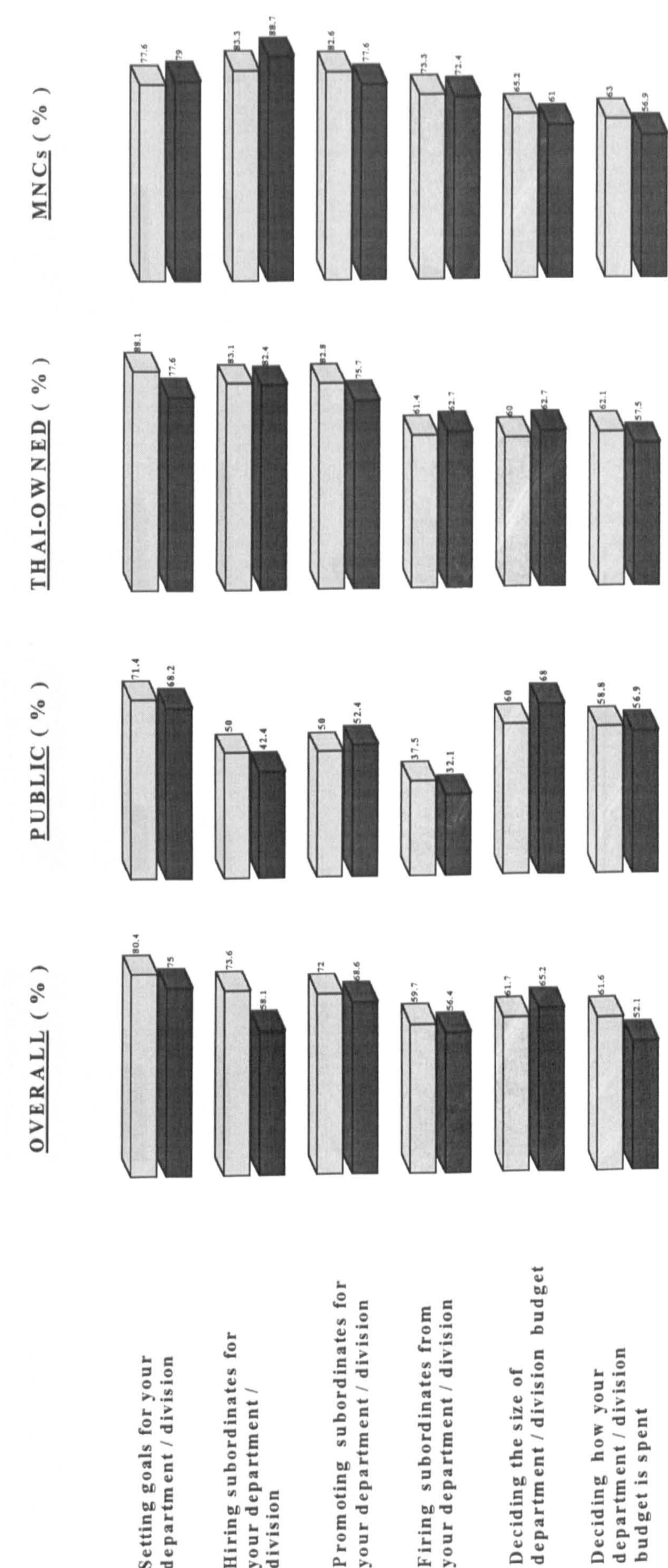




CHART 6.16

HOW DO YOU ANTICIPATE THAT YOUR CAREER WILL PROGRESS IN THE NEXT 3 - 5 YEARS?

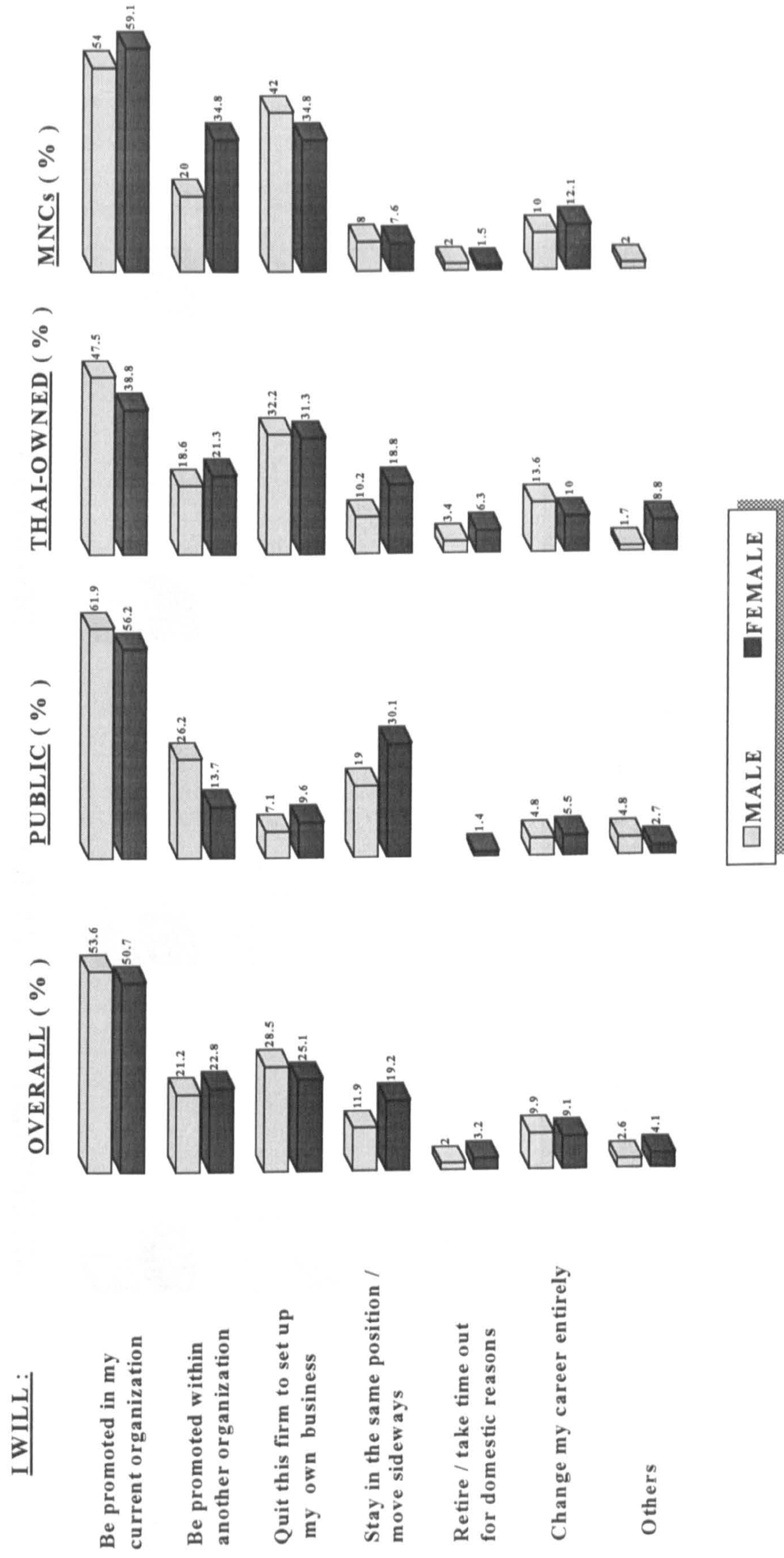




CHART 6.17

DO YOU PREFER TO WORK FOR MANAGERS OF YOUR OWN SEX ?

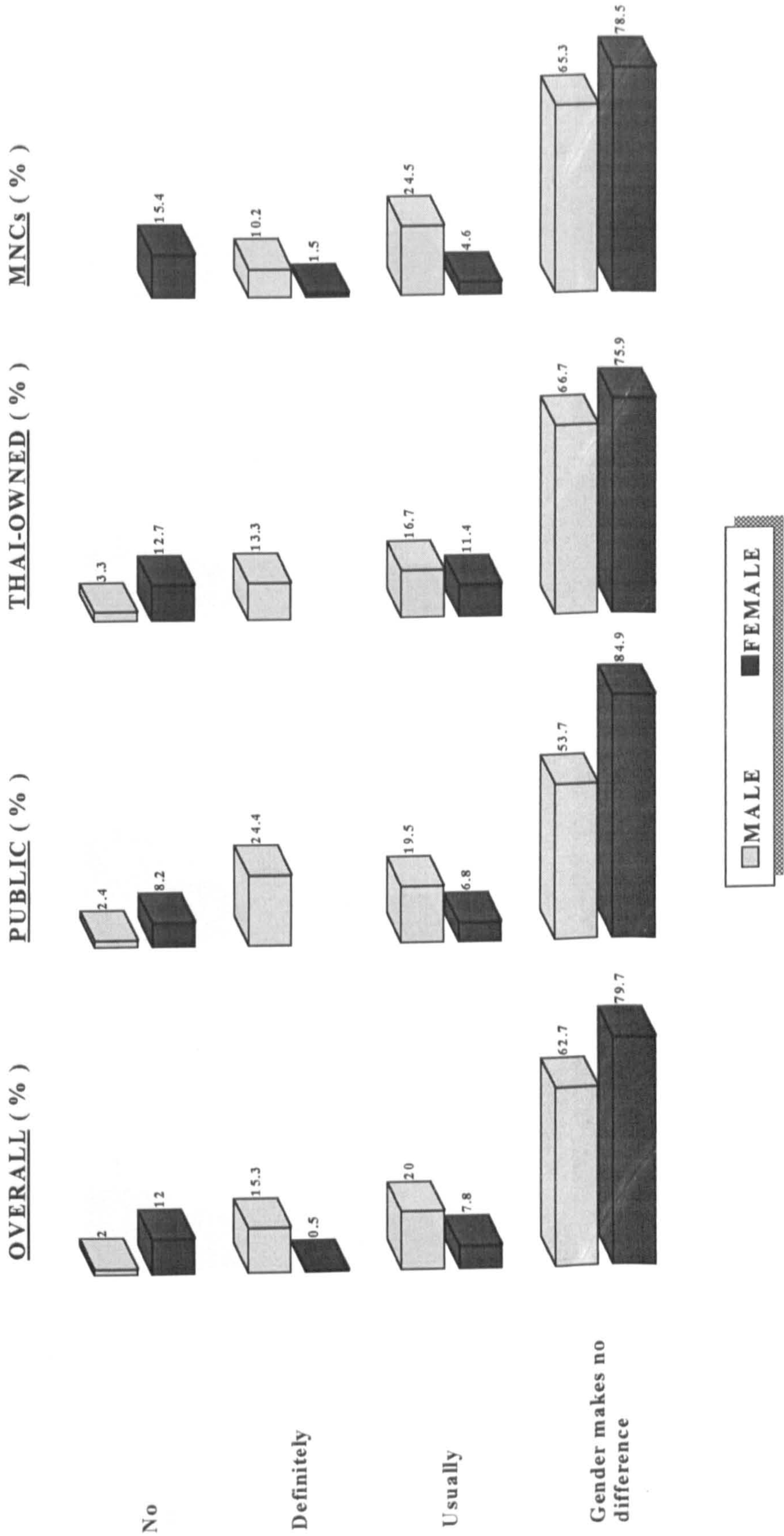


CHART 6.18

DO YOU PREFER MALE OR FEMALE SUBORDINATES ?

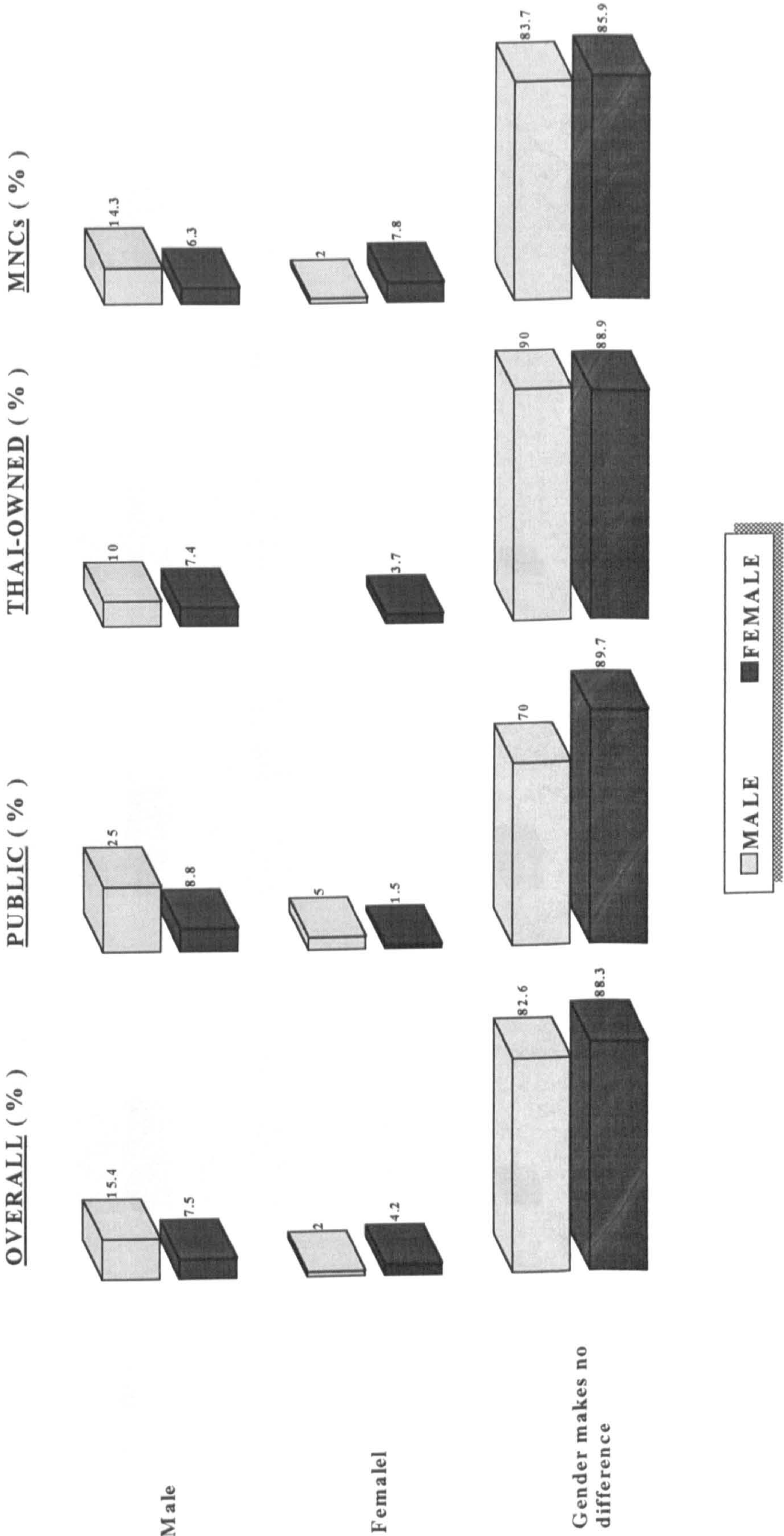




CHART 6.19

HOW DO YOU RATE YOUR FIRM AS A PLACE FOR WOMEN TO WORK ?

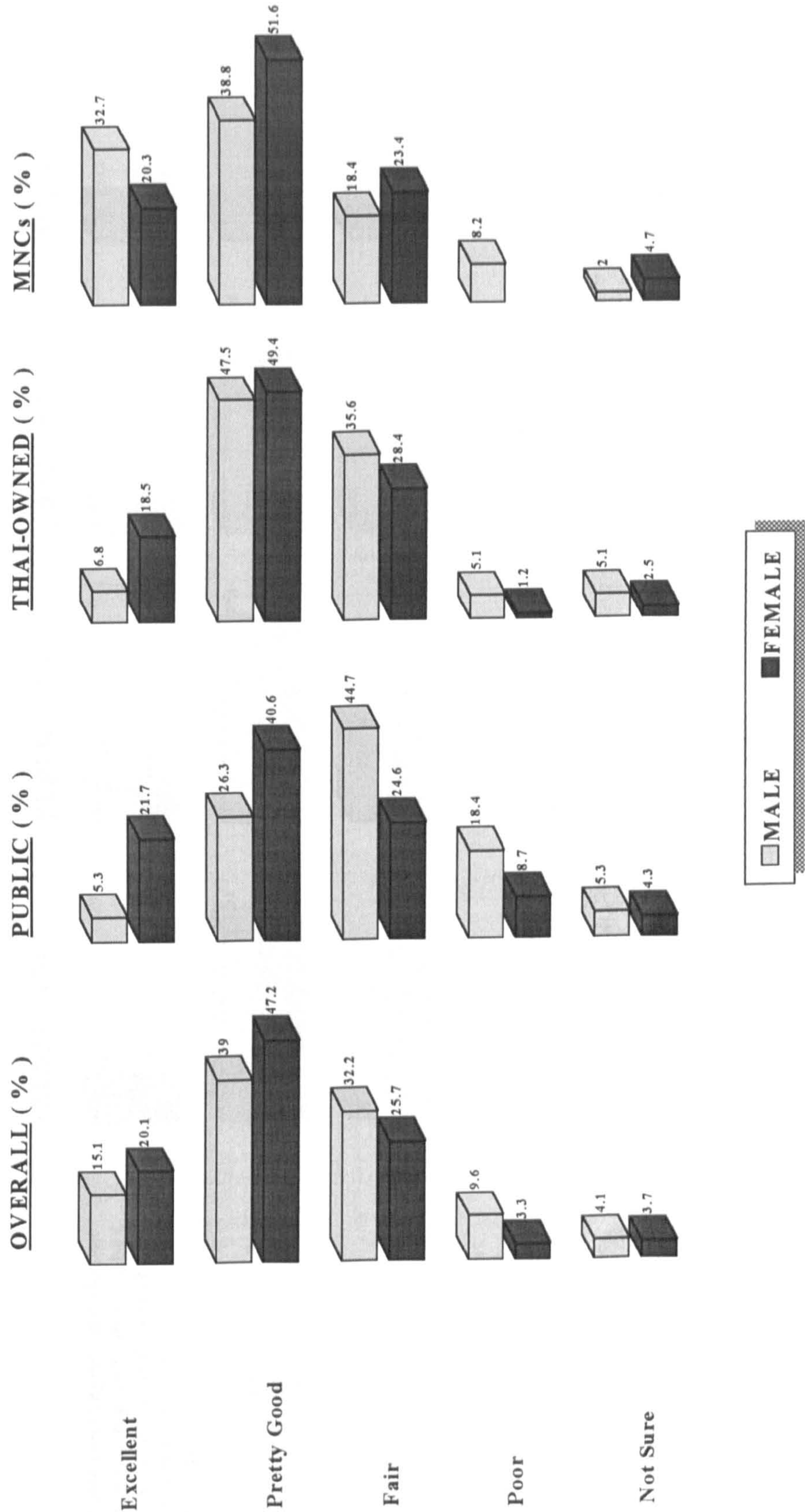




CHART 6.20  
DO YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STRATEGIES ?  
(AGREE)

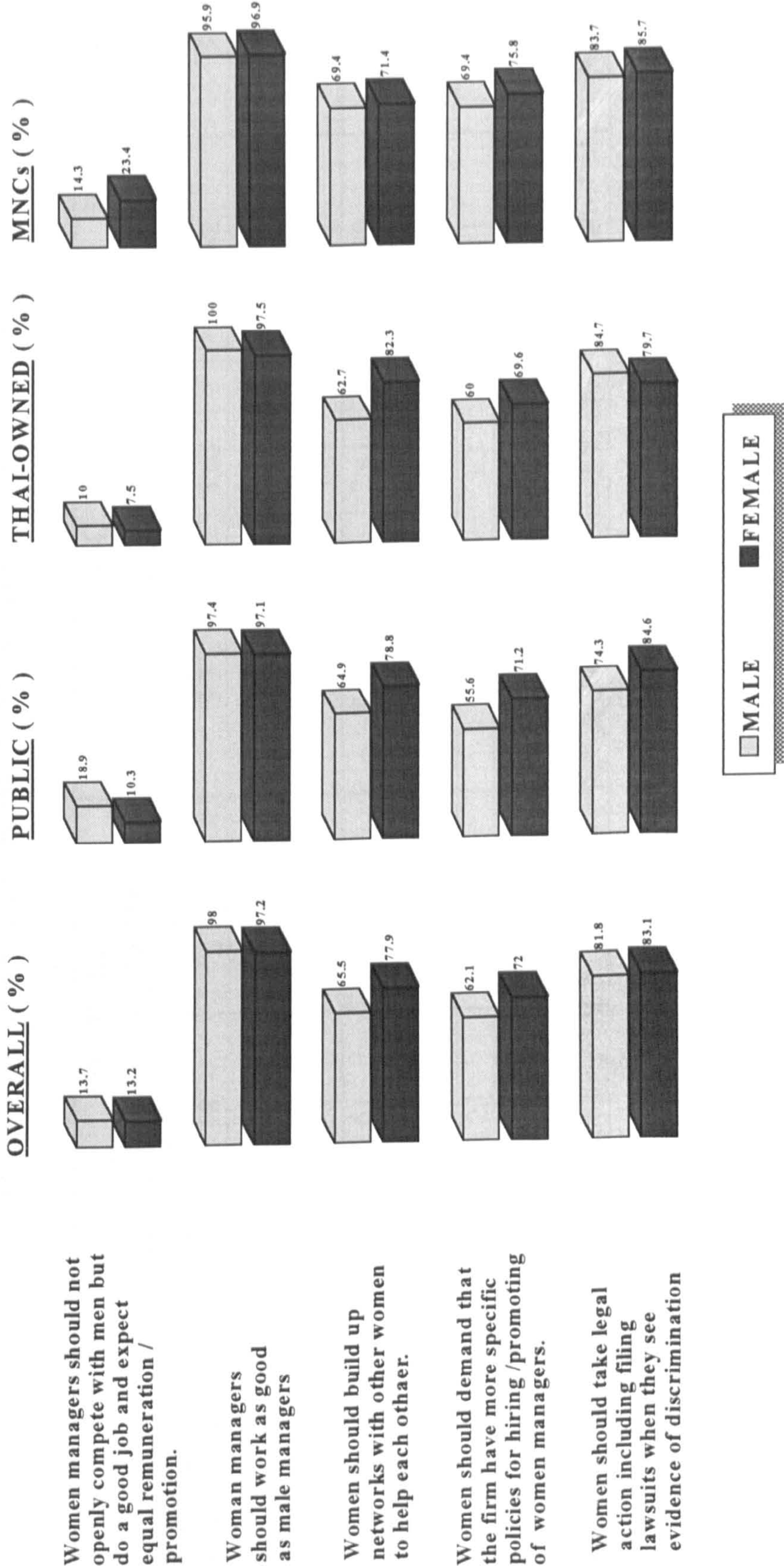




TABLE 6.1

MEAN SCORES FOR MOTIVATION TO WORK

	OVERALL		PUBLIC		PRIVATE	
	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE
Status Promotion	3.72	3.51	3.4	3.31	3.65	3.58
Sense of Achievement	3.18	3.86	3.5	3.63	3.42	3.71
Autonomy	3.41	3.73	3.20	3.80	3.31	3.73
Sense of Power	3.66	3.02	3.43	3.12	3.33	3.21
Financial Reward	3.57	3.21	3.10	3.01	3.51	3.28
Respect from Others	2.61	2.58	2.52	2.41	2.39	2.35
Meetings Deadlines	3.42	3.65	3.3	3.41	3.51	3.62
Opportunity for Development	3.01	3.41	2.98	3.01	3.36	3.4
Feedback	3.23	3.46	3.17	3.3	3.21	3.38
Lots of Free time	3.11	3.12	3.22	3.21	2.95	2.98
Job Security	3.21	3.11	3.23	3.2	3.08	2.92
Fear of Failure	2.81	2.83	2.4	2.7	2.68	2.93

TABLE 6.2

RANKINGS OF IMPORTANT MOTIVATORS BY RESPONDENTS IN THE TWO SECTORS

RANKING	PUBLIC			PRIVATE	
	MALE	FEMALE		MALE	FEMALE
IMPORTANT TO VERY IMPORTANT	- STATUS PROMOTION	- AUTONOMY		- SENSE OF ACHIEVEMENT	- AUTONOMY
	- FINANCIAL REWARD	- SENSE OF ACHIEVEMENT		- SENSE OF POWER	- SENSE OF ACHIEVEMENT
	- MEETING DEADLINES			- STATUS PROMOTION	
MODERATELY IMPORTANT TO IMPORTANT	- SENSE OF ACHIEVEMENT	- MEETING DEADLINES		- MEETING DEADLINES	- MEETING DEADLINES
	- SENSE OF POWER	- STATUS PROMOTION		- JOB SECURITY	- STATUS PROMOTION
	- AUTONOMY	- OPPORTUNITY FOR DEVELOPMENT		- LOTS OF FREE TIME	- FEEDBACK
	- JOB SECURITY	- FEEDBACK		- AUTONOMY	- LOTS OF FREE TIME
		- FINANCIAL REWARD		- FEEDBACK	- JOB SECURITY
		- SENSE OF POWER		- FINANCIAL REWARD	- SENSE OF POWER
OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE	- LOTS OF FREE TIME	- LOTS OF FREE TIME		- OPPORTUNITY FOR DEVELOPMENT	- FEAR OF FAILURE
	- FEAR OF FAILURE	- FEAR OF FAILURE			- RESPECT FROM OTHERS
	- RESPECT FROM OTHERS	- JOB SECURITY		- RESPECT FROM OTHERS	
				- FEAR OF FAILURE	



## **CHAPTER VII**

### **INTERVIEWS WITH WOMEN MANAGERS**

As stated in the objectives of the study, it is necessary to build up a body of knowledge on Thai women managers by allowing them to 'tell their side of the story', since only from this vantage point is it possible to see how their world is organized and the extent to which it differs from that of men. As mentioned earlier, the questionnaire is an instrument that is useful, but at the same time limited in its ability to elicit information. For instance, in this study, the questionnaire did not help to obtain detailed information, neither did it help shed light on certain aspects which were sensitive or subtle. Thus interviews were chosen not only because they could help clarify some of the issues which the questionnaire could not sufficiently examine but also provide an opportunity for women to comment on those experiences which were distressing or sensitive in their professional and personal lives. While reporting the findings in this chapter, important differences between Thai women managers and their counterparts in the West are also made.

#### **Who are the interviewees?**

67 women managers, all mid-level managers employed by organizations in the Bangkok metropolis were interviewed. These women made up approximately 33 per cent of the 204 women who had previously responded to the questionnaire. The women were working primarily in headoffices (in Thai-owned firms) or in the subsidiary offices of MNCs, just three were in factory-type operations.

What was the profile of these women managers? Their ages ranged from late twenties to mid-fifties, the average age being 38, although nearly 40 per cent of the sample had not yet reached age forty. More than two-thirds of them were married and had on average 2 children. Eight women had children who were between the ages of 3 months and 4 years. With three exceptions, the vast majority were Bangkokians, and had had most of their secondary education in Bangkok. Twenty eight per cent of the sample had first degrees as their highest qualification and more than half (64.2 per cent) had post-graduate qualifications. Roughly half of the women (33) were employed in the public sector and were classified as C7, C8 and C9 officers. Of the remaining 34 women, 18 were managers in MNCs and the rest were in fully Thai-owned firms. They had titles such as Department Head, Division Chief, Section Head, Controller and various others that were tied to such specializations as law or finance. The most common occupational specializations were sales/marketing, human resources, customer and public relations, and finance.

The interviews which were semi-structured lasted between 1-2 hours and were conducted with each women at a venue of her choosing, guaranteeing anonymity. Interview questions and discussions were wide-ranging but focused on mainly three aspects on which the study is based, namely:

- Explanation for Women's Representation in Management: The effects of early socialization on career choice.
- Division of household tasks, the nature of domestic constraints or difficulties
- Career History, experiences related to being a woman in management, and career barriers.



## **EXPLANATIONS FOR WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN MANAGEMENT**

It has been previously argued that the socialization of women during their formative years are the most critical for the establishment of enduring tendencies and attitudes that affect subsequent experiences. Therefore it seems reasonable to investigate women's childhood experiences to see whether they provide some of the antecedents of success at work.

### **Family Background:**

The large majority of the women in the sample came from middle-class family backgrounds, only two could be classified as belonging to the upper classes while none were from the underprivileged class. While slightly less than half of the sample in the private sector had parents who were immigrant Chinese, the majority of managers in the public sector reported that they had parents who were both Thai. Almost half of the managers in the private sector had fathers who were entrepreneurs or self-employed. Being of immigrant stock, many of the fathers of these women had established small businesses which they managed with their wives' assistance. The rest had fathers who were themselves executives in private organizations. Women managers in the public sector had either their fathers, mothers, or a family member in government service. This correlation of ethnic origin and the sector one works in bears out Skinner's observation of Thai socio-economic classes as reported in Chapter II, i.e., ethnic Thais tend to rely on the civil service for their livelihood while the

Chinese tend to dominate commerce (Skinner, 1957). It also suggests that family background may be significant in determining important career choices in later life.

As stated in the earlier literature, birth order has also been found to be an important indicator of sex-role socialization and career success, studies show that high achievers are more likely to be first born. For both sexes, family size, the number and gender of siblings, relationships to parents, and social class interact with birth order to impact career success. The birth order of women managers in the sample does not conform to the findings of numerous other studies cited in the earlier literature which have noted the predominance of first born children among high achievers. Only 14 per cent were the eldest child with the rest indicating a wide range of birth-order positions. This confirms both Hoffarth's (1989) and Polnikorn's (1991) study of Thai women managers which found no association between birth order and their achievement of managerial positions in organizations.

Over three-fourths of the current sample of women came from families in which the oldest child was a boy, who several of the women pointed out, received the largest proportion of parental guidance and affection. These women further believed that because their parents assigned more responsibility to the oldest son and had high expectations for them in terms of career, they were left with more freedom to choose the subjects they took up at university, as well as the jobs they opted for early in their careers. Surprisingly, while most of the women imitated and identified with their older brother's behaviour, they saw no reason for rivalry. In fact, many automatically



accessed a superior position to their older brother, showing him the same amount of obedience and respect as their fathers, thus adhering to Thai family-centred traditions.

While commenting on the parent-child relationship of their childhood, a consistent theme emerged from the women's description. With the exception of 4 women who had had troubled relationships with either father or mother, the majority emphasized that it was their parents who had supported and encouraged them, with women who had Chinese ancestry claiming that the 'hard work, thrift and perseverance' they had learned as children, was instrumental in the shaping of their future careers. Although most of the women were allowed a certain degree of autonomy in decision-making, many reported that their parents had been strict in their child-rearing practices, maintaining discipline in terms of how they spent their time, their academic performances as well as their general behaviour and disposition.

The literature also shows that girls who had tense relationships with their mothers, or those who had close relationships with their fathers, or whose mothers provided successful career models, are more likely to have higher career aspirations than their peers from more traditional or normal household environment. While the majority of women in the sample strongly believed their fathers were their major source of inspiration and influence, only 2 of the women recalled having negative relationships with their mothers. In fact, for slightly over 10 per cent of the sample, it was the mother who was the role model and who offered greater encouragement to their daughters and this was more likely in cases where the mothers had the major bread-

winning role in the family, or had been divorced or widowed at an early age, or where their husbands were absent from home for long periods.

It can be argued that early influences enhancing a girl's motivation to work may come from a family which is not rooted in the status quo and is free from society's classic notions about women's place and the sex division of labour. Furthermore, that immigrant parents might be more apt to encourage daughters to try a new way and to find a better life, than those too tradition-bound to expect change (Epstein, 1970). Several of the women whose parents were Chinese immigrants recounted stories of how hard both parents worked to build up their business from nothing and while they saw their fathers as 'leaders in the family', they also remarked on their mother's 'strength' in working in the business as well as assuming all the childcare and household responsibilities. A woman manager in a MNC recalled:

Although both my parents came to Thailand from China and both worked incredibly hard, it was my mother I admired more. She controlled all the money, took care of worker and customer needs and at the same time, managed the household and her children. Mind you that was no easy task, there were eight of us. Father always said that without mother, the business would have collapsed ages ago. (Respondent # 25).

Without exception, all 14 per cent of the women who were the eldest child claimed having close relationships with their fathers. Several of these women believed that their fathers were actually disappointed that they were not born boys but had got over this, and shared activities with them which were more traditionally regarded as appropriate for sons. The women interviewed by Hennig and Hackman (1964) like these in the current sample, suggested that their fathers made them believe that they could do more than girls were normally allowed to do. Three of the women mentioned that although



sons were born later on, their fathers continued to support and teach them to be independent and choose roles they were attracted to, rather than adopting typically prescribed roles.

On being questioned about parental involvement in choice of career, the majority of women, in both sectors, reported that their parents had offered suggestions and advice but had left the decision in their hands. However, the women whose fathers or other family members were employed as government officials felt that they were given stronger encouragement to apply for public sector posts than women whose fathers were self-employed. Roughly a quarter of the sample who had working mothers, in both sectors, reported that it was their mothers and not so much their fathers who were ambitious for them. In fact, four women with mothers in high-status jobs, referred to their mother's support and involvement throughout their careers. Another significant factor worth mentioning is that while most of the women were expected to marry and raise families, the women with working mothers felt they had been less pressured in this regard than those who had mothers who were full-time housewives. It is possible that their mother's satisfaction with their jobs and their ability to combine roles effectively, allowed them to encourage their daughters towards prioritizing a career-orientation rather than a home-making orientation.

## **Education**

The nature and level of obtained education are importantly related to subsequent career achievements and to socio-economic status and lifestyle. As mentioned in the

literature, researchers have noted that along with marital status and family-related priorities, education can be considered the most important variable in women's career development.

Roughly half of the women had attended single-sex schools and had chosen the arts stream. It must be remembered that some of these women in their mid-forties had been in school during the late 1950s and early 1960s, when there were few co-educational schools and when not many women selected science as a major field of study. Their parents having had few opportunities for education, several women indicated that it was not the family, so much as friends and teachers who influenced their choice of subjects. Pheasant (1960) had given attention to the special issue of girls' school careers at that time, and found that teachers in a majority of schools tend to influence girls along the lines of conservative, societal sex role images, encouraging the selection of 'feminine' course options. Many of the women who had chosen arts had majored in language, English and French being popular choices at the time.

Interestingly, it was the younger managers in the sample, especially those in their early thirties, who had tended towards both co-educational schooling and the choice of science or business as the major stream. Many of these women had shown remarkable achievement throughout their school years, often being at the top of their classes. Sixteen of the women had in fact, received scholarships for their first degrees. Despite having parents who were both more liberal and educated to a higher level than the parents of most older women managers, several described the pressures they experienced at home, especially from their mothers, who wanted them to enrol in more



'ladylike' courses. One of the women who had an undergraduate degree in engineering said:

My mother told me to study Arts because she wanted me to be a teacher. She taught me to be soft, gentle and very feminine. It was my brother who was encouraged to take up science and qualify as a doctor. Imagine mother's shock when I entered engineering! (Respondent #22).

Another woman manager whose parents were of Chinese descent, faced a situation where she was made to feel that being competitive with men would decrease her chances of dating and marrying:

Mother always used to say 'find yourself a good husband first, higher education and career can come later. Women who are too clever do not make good wives and mothers because they threaten their husband's status in the family.' (Respondent # 9)

Despite only five of the women managers having had fathers who possessed bachelor level qualifications, the majority of the women reported that their parents recognized the value of education and encouraged their children to obtain university-level qualification. This could explain why nearly two-thirds of the sample (64 per cent) had masters, and 6.8 per cent, doctoral degrees.

The majority of women had obtained their first degrees from three state-run universities, Chulalongkorn, Thammasat and Silpakorn. Six had studied abroad for their first degree, the remainder had attended private universities in Bangkok. Most of the women aged 40 and above, who had enrolled in the Arts stream in school, had gone on to either a Bachelor of Arts or Education for the first degrees. It was the younger managers, many of whom were in the private sector, who enrolled for business studies at the bachelors level and had opted mainly for accounting, finance,

and marketing as major fields of study. While a few women had chosen the above subjects because they had options to enter their family businesses, the others believed that such fields could give them a better access to occupations, as well as higher salaries.

Likewise, it was younger managers who had pursued further education abroad. Two factors can help explain why they did so. First, by the mid-1980s, a professional or graduate degree, especially an MBA from a foreign university was considered a stepping stone to a career in management, particularly in multinational firms. Second, the socio-economic status of the women's families was high enough to allow them access to universities in the UK, US and Australia. The subject distribution of the qualifications obtained at Bachelors level by women managers is given in Table 7.1 below:

**Table 7.1**

**Subject of Education for first degree qualification (in number)**

Subject	Number
Business Administration/Social Science	31
Professional/Vocational	2
Arts: Language/Education	25
Nursing/Health	3
Science	4
Architecture	1
Engineering	1

It is possible that the field and the level of education of the younger women managers in the sample were more in keeping with the economic boom of the mid 1980s. The



rapid expansion of the Thai economy reinforced by an inflow of foreign capital and manufactured exports created a plethora of managerial jobs in the private sector. The entry to such positions however was through a higher business qualification, and if such was obtained at a university in an English-speaking country, it was often accredited higher status than one obtained at home. Thirty three percent of women managers, below 45, had obtained their MBAs from foreign universities, mainly in the US. It must be mentioned here that only 3 of these women had won scholarships to study abroad. The rest had relied on family support for their education. This demonstrates both the link between a family's socio-economic status and access to higher education, as well as the increased willingness among parents to invest in their daughter's education.

At the time of the interview, nine women were enrolled in part-time higher degree courses, six in the MBA, one in computer science and two in public administration. This pattern of 'going back to school' appears to be more prevalent among older women managers in both sectors, many of whom have children of manageable age. The general feeling among these women was that the higher qualification would speed up their career progression, as is illustrated by the comments from one woman manager:

My family and job took up most of my time when I was younger. But I have no regrets; family comes first anyway. Now with grown children and a lot of experience in the workplace, I feel I make a much better student than many of the younger ones in my class. Besides, I am not too old to get that promotion. (Respondent # 34).

As indicated in the previous chapter, as well as by several authors (Siengthai et al, 1994; Polnikorn, 1991), Thai women managers hold higher educational qualifications

than their male counterparts. This is not surprising given the fact that over three-fourths of the sample attributed education as the most important avenue through which they had entered their present positions. One of the woman managers made this clear:

Let's face it - Thai men have had higher social status and many more opportunities than Thai women. The only way to restore equality is to be better at our jobs than the men. How do we get better? By education, that's how! (Respondent # 6).

## **WOMEN MANAGERS AND THEIR FAMILIES**

### **Marriage**

As mentioned earlier, Thai women are postponing marriage and childbearing and are having fewer children as they enter the workforce in larger numbers. Many urban college-educated women, especially with graduate degrees, are almost thirty before they begin seriously looking for a husband. Postponing marriage is necessary for women to insure that they have adequate time and energy to complete their degrees and establish their careers before taking on the responsibility of marriage and family. The general feeling among the women interviewed was that full-time, paid employment is absolutely necessary in terms of the money as well as the effect that being an independent wage earner has on a woman's status. But a high proportion of the women also strongly maintained that a woman's first job is to manage and care for her family.



As cited in earlier literature, female managers in the West are only a third to half as likely as male managers to be married and are less likely to have children. In fact, as mentioned earlier, none of the 25 women interviewed by Jardim and Hennig (1976) were married. These findings are not consistent with those of the current study in which 68 per cent of the women were married. The majority of those who were single, as well as the two who were divorced, still expressed a desire to 'meet and marry the right man' which can be explained by the high value placed on marriage and children in Asian societies.

### **Spouses' Careers**

Nearly half of the sample of married women had spouses who were businessmen. Among managers in the public sector, it was not unusual to find that husbands also held high-ranking positions in a government agency or ministry. Several women in private sector firms were married to professionals or managers employed in other private sector firms. The general pattern among husbands of women in the sample was that they were older, educated at the same or higher level than their wives, and earned a higher income. These findings are consistent with those reported in the study of British managers by Scase and Goffee (1989) who found that husbands of the women managers they interviewed, held various managerial and professional occupations, which offered relatively good career prospects.

When asked whether they thought a husband's career should be better than his wife's, a clear majority held the belief that a husband should be better than his wife, not only in

terms of career, but also in his earnings, education and social status. While not denying that husbands and wives should both work and each have his/her own interests, ideas and voice in decision-making, they also believed that a husband should be a leader in the family. Several comments from married and single women are reproduced below:

There has to be agreement that man is the head of the family. (Respondent # 16)

People don't really say, 'Oh, she is a good manager.' They say, 'she's a good wife, her husband and children are well-cared for'. (Respondent # 28)

A man does not like to be overshadowed by his wife. So even if you are smarter than he is, in the interest of family harmony, don't show it. (Respondent # 14).

Although a large proportion of the women , especially those in multinational firms in the private sector, earned a substantially high income, they strongly maintained that their husbands were the major breadwinner. One woman expressed herself thus:

My husband allows me to work and enjoy social activities outside as long as I like but he wants to be acknowledged as the head of the family and the major breadwinner. (Respondent # 36).

Five of the women admitted to earning higher salaries than their husbands. This tended to occur most when the women were employed in private firms while their husbands worked for the government; salaries in public sector organizations being nearly one-fourth to half less than private firms. The literature suggests that gender boundaries in the family are likely to be most challenged when the wife earns more, or is more successful in her career, than her partner. Three of these women reported that this



disparity in earnings caused 'some' problem in their marriage. One of these described the experience:

It is not only hard for my husband who sees himself as a low-paid partner, it is also the social stigma attached to such men. I don't think Thai men will ever accept women earning more than them in a relationship. (Respondent # 38).

### **Husband's attitude towards his wife's employment**

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the prevalent view in Thai society even today is that educated women should do some kind of work, but that this should not interfere with their responsibility to the family, as traditionally defined. In this respect, husbands' attitude towards his wife working and his commitment towards her career are important.

Over three-quarters of the married women reported that their husbands did not raise objections to their being in full-time employment. It must be pointed out here that the majority of these women were already in careers before they were married and there was agreement with their husbands that they would carry on working. Several women commented that their husbands would find it 'unnatural' if they stayed at home full time. A woman manager in the department of public health said:

An idle mind is a devil's workshop. My husband believes that women confined to the house tend to nag and are prone to jealousy. He wants me to work, not only for the money, but for a better disposition (Respondent # 10).

It can be assumed that if a woman marries after she has become a professional, the problems of husbands' negative attitude is diminished. She has already chosen and

need not wait for his approval. Three of the women had worked in the same department/office as their husbands when they married and said that combining work and family was something both had accepted. Not all women however, admitted that their husbands were 'very supportive' of their work. In fact, reported attitudes varied along a spectrum from 'actively approving' to 'reluctantly tolerating'.

Interestingly, the women who claimed that their husbands were 'very supportive' were among those who worked long and irregular hours and whose jobs involved travelling. These were also among those who earned the highest salary in the sample. These women, without exception, admitted that without their husbands' support, they probably would not be able to carry on with their jobs. Several comments from the women are reported below:

I can always talk over office problems with my husband. He even understands that sometimes I have to entertain clients and visitors and come home past midnight. When I travel abroad, if he is free, he accompanies me. (Respondent # 59)

My husband gives me a lot of support. He does all the shopping and cooking because his shift ends at 1600 hours. The children also have their own jobs to do, such as the washing up and cleaning. We manage well because there is none of that 'your job' 'my job' business when it comes to household tasks. (Respondent # 65)

He sends and picks up the children from school because his job is more flexible. If I come late, he cooks a simple meal, probably noodles. I guess I am just a lucky woman. (Respondent # 29).

Whilst not many Thai men would call themselves 'lucky' if their wife cooked a simple meal, such a statement made by a woman is not surprising. In most Thai households, it is the mother or maid who is involved in household chores and looking after the



children. The husband usually plays the role of the bystander who offers support and help without dirtying his hands.

For each woman who described her husband as 'very supportive', there was one whose husband did not mind her working but who did not offer any help with either the household tasks or childcare. In most of such cases, the women strongly maintained that they lived with husbands who had more demanding jobs than themselves and they didn't 'expect' them to share household jobs. For these women, their apparent satisfaction with the relatively unequal division of family work is contextualized in terms of the meaning attached to their own work as 'less important' and their husband's work as 'more important' to the maintenance of the family.

Only four of the married women, all employed in private firms, maintained that their husbands were 'reluctantly tolerant' of their job. These women mentioned that the stress they experienced when they got home, was greater because of the pressure from family to quit their jobs, than that they experienced at work. It should be pointed out that the four women had married husbands (3 of whom had Chinese ancestry), who held firmly set opinions on their wife's traditional role in the family

When questioned about the strategies they employed to avoid conflicts between their personal and work lives, these women admitted to using 'pacifist' methods whereby they could maintain family harmony. Refusing promotions, cutting down on travel involved with their jobs, and trying as much as possible to be home in time for dinner daily with their families, were some of these. When questioned whether their husbands

arrived home daily in time for the family dinner, all of the women responded with 'sometimes' (while clearly emphasising that they did not expect husbands to be home everyday for dinner). All, except one, believed that inevitably, they would have to discontinue their career ambitions in order to maintain harmony at home. One of the woman married to a successful businessman said:

My husband's attitude is tiresome. He constantly nags me about neglecting home and children. He keeps telling me, 'we don't need your salary, stay home and take care of the children'. I have MBA qualifications and six years as a manager, you know. Nevertheless, when I persist that I want to keep my job, we end up quarrelling. (Respondent # 7).

## **Children**

As mentioned earlier, a study on fertility rates among Thai women showed that those engaged in clerical and managerial work have the lowest fertility of any group of employed women. The average number of children born to most married women in the sample was two. Interestingly the idea of 'family' seemed to differ among older and younger managers in the sample. Whilst older manager often indicated 'family' was extended with several members and children living under the same roof or in the same compound, and sharing communal tasks, the younger managers saw 'family' as nuclear with their individual family comprising just 1-2 children. Over 82 per cent of the sample reported that they had domestic help of some sort. However, more of the older women managers in the sample indicated that they lived in extended families where they could benefit from the help of other family members with childcare and domestic tasks. With a few exceptions, the majority of the younger managers reported



that having no live-in relatives, they had to depend on maids and servants, many of whom worked erratically, to help them with household duties.

From the information gained in the interviews, roughly half of the women managers saw no negative impact on the children, arising out of the demands of their careers. Neither did they believe that their careers would be better off without children. This finding is not in keeping with that reported in the Western literature wherein women managers reportedly believed that children came in the way of their promotions. As one Thai women manager in the public sector said:

I doubt that women who sacrifice having children will make good managers, in fact I question whether this is true of both men and women. And the existence of a child should not be the factor that determines either a father's or a mother's management success.  
(Respondent # 30)

Several women reported that their children benefited from their high career involvement and felt they were better mothers who spent 'quality time' with their children. Women who lived with relatives in extended families seemed to be less concerned with their children's welfare when they were away at work. Often it was grandparents who took care of the children. This is not unusual, given that within the Asian context, the grandparents' role in childcare and socialization is even today considered of great importance, especially in transmitting cultural values to the younger generation.

It was mainly women, living in nuclear families, who had less than optional arrangements for childcare, i.e., nannies that quit often, part-time maids who showed up for work irregularly, etc. who were most worried about the negative effects of their

employment on the children. The guilt experienced at leaving their children to go out to work was expressed by some of these women:

My little boy is sick often. I can't ask my husband to stay home, it would be unthinkable. I can't take time off so often either. I don't want to quit, but what else can I do? (Respondent # 4).

The children call and ask 'Mom when are you coming home? We haven't eaten as yet.' But I know I shan't be going home for a while because there are urgent things I have to see to. I feel guilty really. (Respondent # 54).

### **Household Division of Labour**

Every society has developed a division of labour which is based on sexual differences. Men and women's work have been distinctly defined in Thailand, and while some decrease in segregation along traditionally stereotyped lines is evident, societal conception of the family roles of a woman, are still the ones more resistant to change. Thai women managers classified the domestic activities generally into three categories:

1. shopping, food preparation and entertaining
2. washing, cleaning and childcare.
3. gardening, house repair and car maintenance.

The majority of married women managers claimed their husbands were fully responsible for the last set of jobs, but for numbers 1 and 2, their answers ranged from 'a little' to 'a lot' of spousal help. The area in which husbands also devoted some time was childcare. Overall, the sample, even the most highly-paid and educated part of it, regarded domestic activities as overwhelmingly a female sphere, and it appears from



the answers, that the woman, as expected, does most of the household activities, most of the time. This confirms why in the previous chapter women reported spending 9 hours per week more than men on household duties and childcare. The only part of the domestic activities which women managers hired help for was number 2, i.e., washing, cleaning and childcare. Most indicated that they shopped for groceries especially on weekends and tried as far as possible, to prepare the evening meal themselves. Twelve per cent of married women without children, reported having no domestic help. These women claimed to having 'a lot' of help from their husbands and appear to show a home management pattern of less cleaning, less shopping, more meals eaten out, and more entertainment.

The women were very family-orientated in the way Asian women have, of placing very high value on family life, particularly the areas concerned with socialization of their children. Most of them said that their major satisfaction came from the family and consistently expressed the view that putting the family first was essential to their children's optimal growth and development, and to family harmony.

As mentioned earlier, 12 per cent of the women had children below the age of four. The most common modes of childcare provision utilized by these women managers included the use of grandparents or relatives, weekly baby-sitters, childcare centres and live-in maids. The most preferred choice however, was to have their children looked after by the grandparents or relatives. As mentioned earlier, dependence on familial and kinship ties as part of childcare strategies is commonly accepted and practised among Thais. Only when women managers were unable to depend on parents and relatives'

help, did they hire nannies or live-in maids. Other arrangements such as nurseries or childcare centres were not a popular alternative because the women believed that it was important for a young child to be cared for in its own home surroundings. Given this kind of thinking one can question whether state-run and company-operated crèches will ever be an alternative childcare arrangement for Thai women. Only women with slightly older children aged 4-6, said they used both nurseries and live-in maids.

Even when women managers hired house maids, taking care of the children and other family responsibilities remain hers and not her husband's, major challenge. They expressed the view that it was their responsibility, not their husband's, to arrange social and entertainment activities, to supervise the children's homework as well as to organize household help and food supplies. These tasks they felt, could not be delegated to others.

The majority of married women maintained that they spent 2-4 more hours per day on home and children compared to their husbands, a factor that eats into their leisure time, as reported in the previous chapter. Despite putting in longer hours, most of them, even those with older children, expressed the conflict inherent in their attempts to fulfil the roles of home-maker and managers simultaneously. The personal dilemma created for women are portrayed in their comments:

On one hand I am trying to contribute as much as I should to my career. On the other hand, my children are crying out for more time. How does a woman put the proper weight between family, children husband, and her work? (Respondent # 32).



Even with two live-in maids, I find it extremely difficult. But I will always choose family over my career. It means I work twice as hard so the family won't be neglected. (Respondent # 9).

Less than ten per cent of the women described their husbands' involvement with household tasks and children as 'substantial' and of a larger magnitude than themselves. Division of labour in these homes was typically not split along traditional gender lines. These husbands often did 'non-traditional' things such as to care for children at night when their wives were on business trips, handle the family food shopping and cooking, drive the children to and from school and even supervise the household help, if necessary. These were women married to husbands whose careers were flexible, or who had made accommodations in their own careers in order to spend more time with the family.

Slightly over two-thirds of the sample had husbands who helped out 'occasionally' and the remaining said they had husbands who offered 'no help at all' in the household. When questioned whether they felt that their husbands 'ought' to share more of the household tasks, many women were ambivalent, adding that they would not know the amount of work which their husbands should be responsible for and the types of domestic jobs they could perform well. Lewis (1992) argued that a factor contributing to the maintenance of traditional roles in the family is the social construction of men, in some cultures, as inept at domestic work. This, together with the traditional Confucian and Indian cultural influences which permeate the Thai way of life, in which inequality between the sexes is espoused, could be responsible for the respondents' low expectations of their husband's contribution to household tasks. One woman in this category commented:

My husband was brought up in a traditional Chinese family wherein the women did all the domestic tasks and took care of children. He doesn't help and I don't expect him to anyway. I have trained my children, including my sons to cook and clean though. (Respondent # 20).

With the exception of a few single women who had no elderly or sick parents to care for, almost all the interviewees had experienced pressures in their lives with little time for themselves. The pressure was more intense on women who were forced to wake up at 4 or 5 am, get their kids up and ready to be taken to school, often before 6 am, to escape Bangkok's horrendous traffic jams. Several women working in crowded downtown areas such as Silom Road, reported they left offices after 8 p.m. to escape the peak after-office traffic jams. As a result, they described their lives as a 'rush from one activity to the next' during the normal weekdays and looked forward to weekends when they could relax and spend time with their children.

Older women managers with grown up children who were employed mostly in the public sector appeared to have the least problem with balancing their family and working lives. These women had achieved a pattern of equilibrium over the years, developed separate work and home identities, had friends and interests outside of work and had learned how to unwind. Three had taken up religious studies, meditation and yoga.

It was the younger women managers with smaller children, employed in private firms, whose jobs involved both travelling and entertaining clients after office hours, who experienced the most tension by way of balancing their lives. For these women there was always 'too much work and too little time to do it in'. Apart from taking the



children out or shopping for groceries on weekends, these managers said they had few friends, often women such as themselves with whom they mixed, and little time for other social activities. Some comments from women in the group were:

I have no time for social activities. I can't remember the last time I went out shopping for myself or to the movies with my girlfriends. I have a few friends now, mostly women in the same situation as myself. We talk of having time with the children during summers but we know this is wishful thinking. (Respondent # 24).

I am so very tired during the week that on Saturdays all I want to do is sleep, sleep and sleep. But the children come in and say, 'Mom you promised to take us out'. How can I disappoint them? (Respondent #13).

From these accounts it becomes evident that the tensions associated with having a challenging job and children cannot be overcome simply by hiring domestic help since this does not resolve the problem of having time to accommodate all the demands made on the women. A few women looked puzzled when asked about 'balance' in their lives strongly arguing that there was no such thing:

If you're committed to a career, you cannot be equally committed to the family. One has to come first. I don't think one can divide time into two equal halves, one for work, the other for family. (Respondent # 1).

Frankly, I think there is no such thing as balance. You either put your career first and the family second or vice-versa. There are compromises to be made everyday. (Respondent # 31).

Have you ever asked Thai men about this balance? I don't understand this concept anyway. I think if I take care of everyday needs and the occasional crises at work and home without leaving out anything important, it is more a question of common sense. Talking of balance is too 50-50 in my opinion. (Respondent # 34).

I think that those who suggest that people can work 60 hours a week and enjoy a real family life are gravely mistaken. (Respondent # 35).

The high amounts of stress arising from role conflict and overload have been well-documented in the Western literature. According to US studies, the scarcity of free time can result in mental and physical illnesses as well as behavioural symptoms such as changed sleeping habits, alcohol, drug and smoking abuse, among others. Cooper et al (1984) suggest that working women may join the growing number of men who suffer from stress-related illnesses as a result of work. Although many interviewees reported facing higher pressures in respect of their career/home conflicts than their husbands, their stress in behavioural terms, i.e., increased smoking, alcohol and drug abuse etc., is less pronounced than their counterparts in the West. This can be explained in two ways. First, smoking, drinking and drug abuse for women carry a social stigma in Thailand and because of their unacceptability, they are not envisaged as stress outlets for women. Second, the stronger family support as well as the strong influence of religion in the lives of the women have given them better 'coping mechanisms', in fact, several women reported having recourse to meditation, or listening to sermons on Buddhist teachings either in the temple or in their homes, when they felt the overwhelming effect of stress in their lives.

In the closing question of this section, roughly three-quarters of the sample of married women managers believed that although their careers and promotions were important, they were secondary to their husband's. Most saw the prospect of losing their jobs as not as threatening as their husband's loss of job or promotion. When asked which partner should quit in case of job relocation or who should adapt working practices in



case a child was sick, the large majority of both married and single women said it was the woman's responsibility to quit as well as to adapt. Their answers can be explained by the fact that it is considered less legitimate for men than women to adapt or quit work for family because it conflicts with gendered expectations in Thai society.

## **CAREER PROGRESSION/BARRIERS**

**Career Histories: Women Managers in the Public Sector:** There was a clear difference in the career histories of women in the public sector and those in private firms. The majority of women in public organizations had started their careers in their present or in related government agencies immediately after graduation, at the average age of 23. Through long service, they had moved upwards through the ranks. None of these women had been appointed to their current positions. At the time of the interviews, the three oldest female managers in the public sector aged 55, 53 and 50 respectively had been in service for an average of 30 years. In 2 out of 3 cases above, the women had started in the same section/unit as she was three decades later. As mentioned earlier, the majority of women had joined public organizations mainly because of the motivation they received from their fathers, many of who were themselves in government service. The average upward move from grade 3 to grade 5 (C3 to C5) had taken an average of 3 years for most, although for some of those with special qualification and language skills, the promotion from one grade to another had been quicker than usual. As the women had reached the higher grades of 7 and 8, promotions were very slow and in many cases, the women had been in the current grade of 7 and 8 for the past decade or more. Women over 50 years, said that they did

not foresee any more upward moves in their careers and that the choice was either to quit now to start their own business, or to continue until they retire.

**Career Planning:** Most of the women managers in the public sector had begun their careers either as entry-level clerical workers, nurses or teachers. Several of them had obtained scholarships to study for postgraduate degrees abroad and had been promoted on their return. Others had studied for higher degrees while holding first level management positions, grade 3 - 5. Aside from their fathers or family members who had motivated them, the women gave a number of reasons for selecting a career in public service. First, they believed such a position offered more security and better fringe benefits than equivalent positions in private firms. Second, they appreciated the regular and often shorter working hours, that could allow them to combine family and work. Third, women believed that there was less discrimination and more equality of opportunities in government service. Lastly, they saw the job as ennobling, one that helped serve King and country.

Although the majority of public sector managers had decided at an early age that they would have careers, many of them admitted to not planning ahead but instead concentrating on the day to day aspects of the job. The fact that many of them had husbands who were either entrepreneurs or in top-ranking government posts gave them a sense of security and in turn, discouraged the women from seeing the urgency of planning a career for themselves. The women had wanted to succeed in their careers very much, although only six of them admitted to an early desire to be managers. Most said they were interested in their career in management only after they



obtained their first job as a manager. In their study of senior managers, Hennig and Jardim (1976) found that many of the women had not planned their careers in any detail and that many had made late career decisions, approximately ten years into their working lives. This pattern appears to be similar to the women managers in the public sector, who had taken up higher degrees in business and public administration only after their first management appointments.

**Career Histories : Women in the Private Sector:** As compared with women in the public sector, the majority of those in private firms were younger, more ambitious and more inclined towards planning their careers. A large proportion claimed that their parents had no involvement in their careers. Having neither education nor careers themselves, many parents were in no position to advise them about prospective careers. Just as they were allowed to make their own decisions about enrolling subjects at university, they made their own choices where jobs were concerned. Most of these managers had entered the job market after receiving their first degrees. While 74 per cent of the women had entered as 'junior' 'staff' and 'assistant' officers in mainly accounting and finance, marketing and personnel, some who had obtained entry positions as 'management trainees' in MNCs, appeared to move faster upwards than the rest.

**Career Planning:** Unlike their counterparts in the public sector, a large percentage (54 per cent) of private sector women managers had planned their career paths. Being well-educated as well as highly ambitious, these managers had moved faster between jobs and had made several employer-changing, upward spiralling moves. At the time of

the interview, roughly over three-quarter of the women had changed employers thrice within the last five years. Unlike their sisters who offered reasons such as 'higher job security', 'shorter working hours' etc. as reasons for being in government jobs, those in the private sector offered reasons such as 'higher pay' and 'challenging work'. Quicker promotions was also cited as a major reason for working in private firms. Most of these managers claimed that they had quit their previous positions not because of money but because they had been motivated by needs for growth and achievement. Typical comments were as follows:

The pay was relatively high but the job was boring. I had friends who were stuck in dead-end jobs who moaned constantly. I decided to look around and find something better. (Respondent # 8).

Everything was good, the pay, the location, the challenge of the job. Unfortunately, promotion prospects were bleak. My boss looked like he was going nowhere and I was not prepared to wait. So I quit. (Respondent # 37).

Several other differences were evident between women managers in the two sectors. First, was the amount of risk women in private firms were willing to take in the early stages of their careers. Whereas women in public sectors had spent their entire life working in one organization, those in private firms had experimented, rejected those which seemed inappropriate and were still willing to move when the right opportunity came along. Second, nearly a quarter of these women admitted to 'wanting to be managers' and working towards this goal, unlike public sector managers whose careers had 'happened' to them. Lastly, while women managers in public sector had selected jobs mostly in the fields they had graduated from and had collected related job experience throughout their careers, the women in private firms had remained



flexible, opting for a combination of tasks and organizational settings, gaining wider job experience along the way.

### **Present Job**

All 67 of the women had been in their present jobs for two years or more. The average length of time for private sector women managers in their present job was roughly 3-5 years, however public sector women managers averaged 7-8 years in their current job. While in the public sector, women had formally applied and had taken civil service examinations to gain appointments to higher levels, the women in private firms, other than applying through newspaper advertisements, had been approached by head hunting agencies, or had used recruitment firms, consultants and in some cases, obtained their positions through informal sources.

### **Factors influencing Career Success**

Women in both sectors said that the most important determinants of career success were related to their own resources, abilities and performance however when it came to secondary factors, there was a difference in answers. Women in private firms cited factors such as ability to be tough and decisive, ability to manage subordinates, hard work and willingness to take risks as contributing to their success. Whereas women in public organizations cited good relationships, support from top management, flexibility, and open-mindedness as those contributing to their success. Dhiravegin (1985) in a study of the promotion and career advancement patterns of the Thai

bureaucracy elite points out that while the merit system is used as a criterion of promotion, favouritism is a factor that cannot be ruled out. The author further argues that a very capable person who is subordinate and who does not give his/her boss the right amount of deference, is likely to find himself/herself stagnating, with no hopes of smooth advancement in the system. Hence while women in the public sector mentioned interpersonal skills as important for their career success, women in private organizations did not cite it among the top factors leading to success.

The responses of women in the two sectors also differed when they were asked about the specific factors offered by the organization that had made them successful. Women in private firms identified challenging assignments, recognition, sufficient training and development as well as good career prospects. Public sector women managers however cited being accepted, clarity of job description, convenient working hours and helpful colleagues as important. It becomes clear from both the above accounts that whilst job content is an important determinant of what factors lead to success for women in private firms (challenging assignments and job involvement), job context is more important a determinant of success for women in the public sector.

## **Promotions**

In the current survey, only one woman in the public sector between the age of 46-55 had been promoted over the last five years. Women who held grade 8 positions in this age group, felt that despite being capable, they had reached the height of their careers. Although a few of the women in this age group as well as roughly 62 per cent of



women in younger age groups in the public sector would accept promotion if it was offered them, the women felt there were few chances of being promoted and had become resigned to dead-end careers. This illustrates that these women believed in their ability as managers but perceived the existence of a 'glass ceiling' at about the C9 management level. They expressed frustration at having spent their entire lives working hard only to be blocked at a later stage in unchallenging jobs in their tightly-structured bureaucratic organizations. Some commented as follows:

I did feel loyal and committed in the past but there was little left of that I can tell you. I work, I get paid and that's it. I can't see any challenge ahead, so why bother? (Respondent # 40).

I have worked hard for 35 years and that's over half my life. The job doesn't get better, in fact, the squabbling and back-biting are beginning to unnerve me. My husband wants me to resign...there's no point in struggling is there? I'll try to go on working only as long as I can cope. (Respondent # 39).

While women in public sector firms were either not keen or were pessimistic about their chances of future promotion, nearly three-quarters of those in the private sector, especially the younger generation of managers in multinational companies actively sought promotion for themselves. Roughly half of these were single and were employed in the functional areas of sales & marketing and finance. They expressed the view that promotion was one way the organization had of recognizing their hard work and saw it as a chance to expand their present job skills rather than only as a means of increased status. Most also saw promotion as coming as a result of their abilities and experience rather than through 'luck' or by 'accident' A woman manager in a MNC had this to say:

I am very good at my job and I want promotion. Its not a matter of money. Its all my hard work paying off. I am committed to this organization and I expect it to reward me for this commitment. What will I do if promotion is not forthcoming? Quit, I suppose. (Respondent # 38)

Overall, women in MNCs had been given and expected more promotions than women in locally-owned private firms. It was evident here that women who expressed a strong desire for promotion were those who engaged in higher levels of career planning. They were also among those who had changed their jobs more frequently over the past five years. In the UK, Nicholas and West (1988) found evidence that younger women were changing organizations. They further suggest that women more than men tend to make out-spiralling moves, changing employers and functions, accompanied by upward moves, and that many of these women are younger specialists. These findings being similar among Thai women might mean that when ambitious women foresee a blocked career path, the only way open would be for them to pursue more progressive careers in other organizations. In fact when asked what they would do if they did not receive any promotions when they felt they deserve them, the majority said they would quit to join other organizations.

When the women in private firms were asked about the highest level to which they could be promoted should they continue to work in their present firms, slightly over a quarter of the women (28 per cent) said they hoped to work in their current organizations but of these, less than 5 per cent said they could hope for a position in top management, i.e., Director or Vice-President. Those who said they had no hope for a promotion to senior levels gave replies such as 'it's not easy', 'it's not the done thing', 'there are no women up there' or 'I'd probably retire before then'. On being



asked further whether they thought they were capable of handling the job, all except two, said they felt confident of their ability to manage in a senior position.

Most of those who said they would refuse immediate promotion were either married with young children or those who had no intention of changing the status quo. These were women with spouses who were businessmen who acknowledged that they did not have to put financial considerations first. Whilst none ruled out accepting promotions altogether, those with young children felt that promotions always came with a 'price tag' and this meant compromising valuable time spent with the family.

One expressed herself:

With a job that's too demanding and for which my family life would suffer, I would say no...the price is too high. (Respondent #46).

Some felt that there was no point in struggling for promotion when they faced basic uncertainties about the future, i.e., whether to continue working, to change to other professions or even to move to another country. As cited in the literature, women managers may be less inclined to construct career plans consciously because they are more accustomed to unpredictable work experiences.

Over half of the women in private firms and roughly a quarter of those in public organizations had long-term plans of starting their own business. Seven of the women had already made concrete plans of what business to start and who their partners would be. At the time of the interview, one woman had in fact resigned, to start a gift shop with a friend. When questioned why they would want to leave their present careers which offered them possibilities of promotion over the next few years, women

replied that entrepreneurship offered them a route through which their personal effort and ability could be better rewarded. Many of the women who were marketing managers or in sales, believed that they had acquired technical skills in their present jobs which would help them launch their own businesses later in their careers. Scase and Goffee (1989) argued that ambitious women in Britain face a variety of frustrations in their particular jobs and because they encounter a number of career barriers, many were opting out of corporate careers. Similarly, Marshall (1994) in her interviews with senior women managers reported that after prolonged periods of struggling to achieve an identity they valued, and of feeling under pressure, the women had decided to leave their organizations. When questioned whether they planned to quit because of similar reasons, several of the women confirmed it was so. One said:

I have never felt ashamed about being called ambitious. I was always the best in whatever job I have done. I am not fully satisfied with my present level of pay, job responsibility and personal development. I want more. I want to run my own show - I don't want to be an employee, no matter how high. (Respondent # 29).

For several of the other women, it was not organizational barriers as much as lifestyle choices of themselves or their husbands that made them perceive entrepreneurship as a better deal than corporate careers. These managers, both single and married, did not want to risk devoting too much energy to work at the expense of other areas of their lives. Their move out of organizations to establish their own business was one which they envisaged would give them more control over their time, more opportunities to spend time with their children and flexibility to accommodate pressures from family and work.



## **Mentors**

Mentors are mentioned in the literature as those who play a crucial role in career development and are even more critical to the career success of women than men. More than half of the sample made special mention of senior male managers who had acted as mentors and who had helped facilitate their career progress. This was more evident among women in the private sector and in the areas of marketing and finance. Although many of these women had moved on to new jobs and new companies, the majority of them continued to maintain the relationship with their mentors. More women in the public sector had female mentors. These women had worked or continued to work in departments that had been female-dominated, i.e., the ministry of public health. Many of the managers in the private sector had typically entered their organizations at the level of administrative assistant or management trainee. They had become attached to their direct bosses, who were mostly male, and were promoted up the hierarchy with them. These women attributed their success largely to the support of the male mentors.

When asked what roles their mentors played in the development of their careers, most women cited three roles, coaching in terms of job performance, advising on career decisions and nominating them for promotions. Private sector women managers also believed their mentors had helped them access important resources. Nevertheless, managers in the two sectors differed on the question of mentoring other women. Women managers in private firms said they had mentored both women and men equally and several said that it was not proper to mentor women just because they are

women. Almost half of the women in the public sector had served as mentors mainly to women, however their mentoring was chiefly among women in clerical positions.. Of those who had not served as mentors, several mentioned that although they will willing and even saw the need for mentoring, their female subordinates did not perceive them as mentors and often turned to senior male managers for advice and encouragement. There is evidence to show that both women and men do have equal intentions to mentor, however, women perceive more drawbacks in engaging in that role (Ragins and Cotton, 1991). This was evident among the group of female managers who believed that they could not serve well as mentors because they themselves lacked adequate organizational power and control over resources. One woman commented:

There are days I feel I cannot keep ahead of the game. I feel powerless and insecure myself, so how can I serve as a good role model for other women? (Respondent # 45).

## **Training and Development**

On the question of whether the organization had helped women to succeed, especially where training and development was concerned, the responses were mixed. The most positive responses came from women employed in MNCs and certain public sector managers. Those most dissatisfied with the level of organizational support were those employed in Thai-owned private firms. Women had on average, been on three training programmes in the duration of eight months (January - August 1995), with women in MNCs having longer training programmes lasting from four days to two weeks. The most common training offered was technical, coaching by supervisors and self-



development. Women in marketing and information technology in both sectors, had received the highest level of technical training, mainly on the job. None of the women had been involved in training related to career planning or mentoring. Seven had been in advanced management programmes and only two had attended a conference where issues related to women working in a male-dominated environment were raised. Overall, only 32 per cent of the sample expressed the view that their organizations had done everything possible for them to succeed.

In response to the question 'what more can your organization do to help you succeed?', the answers of the remaining 68 per cent differed according to whether they were single or married. Women with family responsibilities, especially those in the public sector, wanted developmental opportunities and training schemes, characterised by greater flexibility and fewer demands. These women were less interested in promotions that required geographical moves, abrupt career changes and training that required their attendance in off-working hours and outside city locations. Women without family responsibility were interested in opportunities that gave them greater visibility and skill development and they expressed a preference for geographical moves. Several women with grown-up children, wanted just as much challenge and responsibility in their jobs as that expressed by single women or those who had no family responsibility. When questioned further about the probability that the organizations in which they worked could satisfy their needs in terms of training and development, the women appeared pessimistic. It became apparent from the study, that companies in Thailand are not doing enough, either to facilitate the careers of, or to maximize the potential and learning of their women middle managers.

## **Managerial activities/relationships**

There was a wide disparity in the activities undertaken by women managers in the two sectors. Several younger women in the public sector complained about the increasing volume of routine administrative tasks which they found 'boring' and 'unchallenging'. As such, they were less likely to be able to utilize their personal talents and skills fully and to exercise discretion in their decisions. When asked whether new technology had changed the nature of their day to day work practices, older managers in this group (those over 50) vehemently responded that new technology was of little importance. Only two had taken computer courses, the rest confessed to having neither the motivation nor the necessity of technology in their jobs. One woman manager in her 50s responded:

I've done this job ever since I was in my 20s. I know all there is to know about the work in my department. Computers are faster, no doubt, and they have memory and functions, but all they can do is map on the screen something I've done manually. Can they change the basic nature of my job? I think not. (Respondent # 30)

Women in the private sector were not burdened by routine administrative tasks, however they carried heavier workloads which required longer and more strenuous hours. Several said that when they had been non-managerial employees, they had worked 9 to 5 days but as they rose upwards, the working hours had progressively risen to 50-60 hours a week. Women in different functional specializations devoted varying amounts of time to managerial functions. While women in marketing, sales, public relations and administration reported they spent the major portion of their time



on face to face encounters, negotiations and meetings, those in finance, personnel and information technology found they were more preoccupied with technical matters. There were two more striking differences between women in the two sectors as far as job duties were concerned. One, unlike women in public sector jobs, those in private firms enjoyed a degree of freedom to make decisions, take on responsibilities and exercise personal judgement. Second, the large majority believed that information technology had helped them to cope better with the complexities of the job and allowed them rapid access to information which enhanced their ability to make decisions. In fact, most of these managers were adept at using several software packages as part of their jobs.

### **Management Style**

In examining personal management styles and their perceived relevance, most women managers reported that they were comfortable with the mainly feminine management style they used at work. Most managers in the sample reported using a sensitive and interpersonal management style as well as a co-operative approach compared to their male colleagues. Some quoted the old Chinese saying to illustrate their point: 'A man's charm is in his strength, a woman's strength is in her charm'. While not denying that there were periods when a task-orientated or a more autocratic style was called for and used, the women believed that their core 'softer' style was based on qualities and advantages they have as a result of being women.

Several women managers related this way of behaving to the precepts of Buddhism and said that although both women and men accepted Buddhism equally, women were better equipped to carry out this philosophy in their daily lives and work and by using it, get the best out of their subordinates. A woman in the public sector who attended religious classes at weekends explained :

There are four precepts in Buddhism which emphasize co-operation and working happily together. The first is *aphayathan* which means being able to apologize for one's mistakes as well as forgive others for theirs, *piyawaya* , the ability to know what to say, how to say it and when to remain silent, *attajariya*, the willingness to sacrifice one's self-interest in the interest of the group and *samanatata*, the art of behaving, doing what is right, not judging others and being approachable (Respondent # 15).

When asked what differences they perceive in their own styles as compared to the men they worked with, the women described the men as being more 'dominant', 'risk-taking', 'independent' and 'opportunistic'. This is interesting given that the majority of male and female respondents in the questionnaire survey had claimed they employed a person-orientated style of management. Women managers described their own characteristics as 'loyal', 'creative', 'participative' and 'trusting'. The women also believed that they were more ethical and willing to pay attention to details, whereas men focused mainly on the big picture.

Women who were not in typically hierarchical structures but in project teams emphasised the role of human relations in their day to day work. These managers were responsible for skilled, trained and highly qualified staff and had recognised the need to allow working autonomy to their subordinates in the performance of their tasks. For these women, motivation and communication skills were more important than



supervision or other tighter forms of control. A woman manager who managed a team in the real-estate industry remarked:

There is no formal style of management necessary here; we all need to work together. I need to work with my people on the team as well as help them develop their talents and abilities. As long as we are efficient, accurate and get things done, I don't see why we can't have a little fun on the job (Respondent # 14)

Although the large majority of the women in the sample agreed there were differences, a few women believed that management style was related more to cultural values and expectations than to one's gender. These women dismissed the argument of there being a 'masculine' management style and a 'feminine' management style and said that the style espoused by both female and male managers was a matter of common sense and the situation, and unrelated to gender. One woman in this group explained :

We are all Thai, both men and women. We treat our subordinates like family, we care and share with them and are dependent on each other. Our behaviour as managers stems from our cultural heritage, what has being male or female got to do with it? (Respondent # 11)

### **Gender preferences of women managers**

There is evidence that female models which incorporate the attribute of independence, objectivity and assertiveness and thereby violate society's common image of femininity repel many men and women. Not only must women not possess characteristics considered male attributes, they must bear the added burden of women's generally low evaluation of themselves (Epstein, 1970). While the current study did not attempt to measure self-evaluation quantitatively, it was evident from their general responses, that the women interviewed thought highly of themselves and felt that others thought

highly of them as well. Yet when they were asked their preference in terms of gender of their immediate superior, the majority (76 per cent) asserted that they preferred to work for male bosses. On being questioned why, the women responded with remarks such as 'fair', 'non-interfering', 'generous', 'allows me to use judgement', 'no temper tantrums'. Surprisingly only a quarter of women in this group had ever had a female boss and were basing their preferences on stereotypes rather than actual experience. Of the women who had women bosses, a few reported negative experiences most of which stemmed out of competition. Two women related their experiences as follows:

The only person who blocked my promotion was a woman. No matter how good I was, I could not please her, she constantly hassled me and made me look foolish in front of others. Perhaps she was jealous because I was younger and better academically qualified than she was. (Respondent # 7)

They say men are power-hungry. But the tactics of my female boss to acquire power is to be seen to be believed. She is so nice to the men, sweet as honey, and they can't see through her. But she does things to me that are not fair, for example, taking my ideas and saying they are hers. It's really terrible. (Respondent #20).

It must be pointed out that the women in both cases were employed in organizations which were male-dominated and which had just one or two women in senior positions. Where resources and opportunities are perceived to be scarce for women, relationships between women managers may also be more competitive.

The 'Think Manager - Think Male' phenomenon was evident from the responses of several women managers, who despite never having worked for a female boss, showed a strong preference for a male. Antal and Izraeli (1992) in an overview of women in management world-wide state that 'probably the single most important hurdle for



women in management in all industrialized countries is the persistent stereotype that associates management with being male' (p.62). The recent findings of the strong degrees of managerial sex-typing among Chinese and Japanese management students (Schein et al, 1996) would, judging from the interview responses, most likely be strong in Thailand as well.

Interestingly, managers who worked in women-dominated firms, i.e., certain financial institutions in the private sector as well as two of the public sector enterprises, defined their women bosses in a positive light and said that their source of support has been their female boss. This could be explained by the fact that in these firms, promotions were less tied to gender, women feel less restricted to particular gender roles and because of these, women are able to manage their competitive feelings in productive ways and build relationships of support. One manager in the public sector had this to say:

My boss is a woman and through her I have learned everything. She takes time to teach me the details unlike the male boss I had in the past. When I have trouble at home, I can confide in her as a friend. She is my ultimate role model. (Respondent # 35).

Overall, women managers of both sectors felt that women bosses were superior to men in terms of teaching subordinates the intricacies of the job, their honesty and their dedication to the task at hand. There was mixed reaction from the sample however, on women's ability to motivate, lead, handle crises and supervise.

When questioned about their gender preference for subordinates, the responses varied according to the specialization as well as the industry. Women employed in financial

institutions, i.e., banks and insurance firms expressed a preference for women subordinates saying that women were better able to deal with detailed work, were tolerant, ethical and more reliable than their male counterparts. Several women managers in marketing expressed a preference for male subordinates based on the fact that the job required travelling and overnight stays, often in rural areas. Women managers in other specializations as well as the majority of those in the public sector emphasized no gender preferences in terms of their subordinates. They said they 'recruited the best person for the job' in terms of technical competence and ability to fit in with the team.

When asked to report their experiences supervising male subordinates, older women managers appeared to have the least tension arising from such relationships. Although Thai society still perceives it inappropriate for women to hold positions of authority over men, many of the feminine role components attached to female sex status becomes less intrusive in interactions between men and women as the woman grows older and she derives respect not only from her status as an expert but also on account of her age. In contrast, younger managers in the sample, especially those with older male subordinates, had experienced negative behaviour in the form of taunts, patronizing comments and even insubordination. A point of interest here is that rarely was the women manager's relationship with her younger or older female subordinates mentioned. It was often the male subordinate's reaction to the women managers that was mentioned. One of the youngest managers in the sample, a marketer in tele-advertising commented :

I was promoted to this position over a lot of male heads. That made them resentful and at the same time, curious. The fact that I was



younger didn't help. They are uneasy working for a woman and show their irritation in subtle ways. If it were not for my high degree of self-confidence, I would have quit right away.(Respondent # 24).

### **Acting like a man**

The women expressed reservations about acting aggressively, 'like a man' to demonstrate their competence. Both younger and older managers felt that emulating men in order to achieve acceptance was neither necessary nor desirable. Some of the managers made references to being 'charming, gentle, sensitive, and soft-spoken' as culturally-valued attributes for Thai women to possess. They portrayed their femininity in positive rather than negative terms and felt that they could achieve more if they acted naturally.

Do not try to be like a man when you are handling men, there's nothing men hate more. Trying to act tough by talking in an aggressive manner simply rubs people the wrong way. The result is that you lose respect and co-operation from both men and women.(Respondent # 44)

Only four women managers one in general management and three in marketing, drew on both traditionally masculine as well as traditionally feminine images when describing themselves. These women had not been aware of their tougher side until they had been promoted and had been forced to compete in their male-dominated firms using more aggressive strategies for survival. Even then, they seemed to have conflicts between their new behaviour and self-image. One explained:

I am not an aggressive person. I hate controversies and conflicts. But I can't pretend to be sweet when things are not going well. I must react, just so the incident does not occur again. (Respondent # 38).

When asked whether they try to achieve their professional goals by using their feminine charms, over a quarter of those in the private sector admitted to using their femininity to achieve some work-related or personal objective. Flirting to attract attention, being charming, and flattering male vanity were admittedly employed by these women from time to time. One woman in the entertainment industry explained it like this:

Let's face it. We can't directly compete with men. If a woman starts acting like them, they will resent her. Instead if she works with the sweetness and charm of a woman, she can get more out of them.(Respondent # 24).

The majority of women however did not see themselves as relying on their femininity to advance. Instead they used adjectives such as 'disgusting' and 'dangerous' to describe such behaviours and believed that women were ultimately likely to be the losers, if rumours about them started to spread in organizations. Even the women who agreed with using feminine wiles from time to time, warned that it was worth nothing unless backed up by superior performance, skills and potential.

## **BARRIERS**

The three common barriers that exist in relation to careers in management for women, as cited in earlier literature, were presented and their interpretations reported under the following headings with simple explanations:

- **Gender-centred barriers:** arising from being a woman, obstacles linked to attitudes of colleagues.
- **Structural barriers:** Organizational or immediate superiors' prejudices, barriers arising from informal male networks.



- **Barriers arising from Organization Processes:** Opportunity and mobility-related barriers which include lack of training, lack of opportunity for promotion or job change across organizations. unfair evaluation procedures, organizational politics.

### **Gender-centred barriers**

In interpreting her respondents' answers to questions of gender and the difficulties associated with being a woman, Marshall (1984) argues that the answers must be understood as 'one way of managing the potential stress of being a woman in a man's world (p.150). Slightly under half the sample of women denied, as did Marshall's respondents, that being a woman had introduced obstacles to their career development. These women saw themselves as extremely capable and privileged in the sense, they had distinct advantages in life, which most Thai women lack. Their explanations echoed the argument put forward by Tantiwiramananond et al (1991) who argued that the emancipation of Thai women is class-specific and limited to the urban sector.

More women in the private sector (38 per cent) than in the public sector (22 per cent) have experienced obstacles because of their gender. While they did not see the obstacles as being with themselves but rather in the attitudes of others, their interpretation highlights factors deeply embedded in Thai social structures. In the British study of barriers to women in management conducted by Coe (1992), the attitude of colleagues was perceived as the greater barrier by younger women and those lower down in the management ladder. The responses of Thai women managers

indicate that this is not the case. Women managers aged 45-55 who had been promoted into middle management level approximately 8-10 years earlier, appeared to perceive barriers arising from the attitude of their male colleagues more strongly than women who were younger and had entered middle management 2-3 years earlier. This could be explained by the fact that younger women have attended co-education schools and colleges, have participated in management training schemes together with male colleagues and have entered organizations in larger numbers than women managers have been in the past, hence their interpretation of this factor as a barrier differed from older women managers.

Several women remarked that they had not been aware of being female when they had entered their organizations and saw themselves as professional persons first. However, they were surprised to find several allusions to being a 'girl' or 'a woman' made by their male colleagues, mainly in a derogatory manner. One manager complained that even though she had been promoted to a relatively high position in management, the senior male vice-president, waved her off dismissively as 'one of the girls'. She explained:

We were going off to this meeting in which we were to negotiate a lucrative contract with foreign buyers. The company car came up and the three male vice-presidents got in. One of them turned to me and said, 'you don't mind do you, the car behind has the secretaries and you'll be more comfortable with the girls. (Respondent # 12).

Women managers who were expected to make field trips or meet visitors/clients as part of their jobs experienced greater obstacles from being women because of these social contacts. They remarked that people in their organizations had got used to



working with or under them and treated them as individuals but whenever they went outside as representatives for their organizations, the old stereotype of 'Oh! I didn't expect a woman' became evident. Interestingly, women managers who dealt with clients/brokers from Japan and the Middle-East countries confessed that they felt 'uncomfortable' during these encounters because they were not seen as professionals but as 'substitutes' for male managers who were too busy to attend. One woman manager recalled an incident in which the male negotiating partner from Oman asked if he could meet with a man because he was 'unused to conducting business with women'.

It was not only the attitude of their male colleagues and superiors that proved problematic, several women managers disclosed that even women subordinates displayed negative or ambivalent feelings towards them. Some of the misconceptions commonly suggested were that they were in unsatisfactory marriages or if they were single, they were too uninteresting to be dated or they neglected their families or that they were getting paid much more than they were worth. Several women remarked that the reactions from women subordinates at the news of their promotions were discouraging and comments such as 'oh her, why not Mr. X'? or 'it's her looks not her capability' indicated that they had to prove themselves both to women as well as men. Women in the public sector recalled how just a few days earlier a high-ranking woman official in the Ministry of Commerce was denied promotion just because an influential male official announced that he 'could not tolerate taking orders from a woman' (Bangkok Post, 18 September, 1995). They said they had the vague feeling that

women were not advancing because of male pride but up until this blatant announcement in the press, had little firm evidence to support their suspicions.

The large majority of women in both sectors asserted during interviews that they spent more time on work than a man would, because they 'must be better than a man'. Scase and Goffee (1989) argued that because women are perceived by their male colleagues as almost 'strangers' or even as 'trespassers', they feel compelled to demonstrate their competence through more explicit and measurable performance criteria' (p.112). The resentment of women who often have to work twice as hard as men in the same unit to get a comparable, if not lower pay was evident from the statements:

The way I work, I know I should be promoted to a certain position. But I also know that what I've done is much more than some other people who have already been promoted to that level. It's not fair, is it? (Respondent # 17).

I work four times harder than my male colleagues to get the same reward.(Respondent # 27).

I have four male subordinates who are older than I am and I am always eager to avoid making even small errors because I know they are waiting for an opportunity to laugh at me. In meetings they tell me '*Nong* (younger sister) you work too hard'. Whatever their attitude I know I have to be constantly on guard.(Respondent # 43).

As mentioned earlier, it is considered inappropriate in Thai culture to display emotion, to challenge or to go in for confrontation of any sort. In fact, the mark of an honourable person is the ability to maintain '*jai yen*' (a cool heart) at all times. Women managers felt that men twisted this culturally-based pattern of behaviour to their own advantage. When women showed anger, they branded her 'emotional', 'hysterical' and



‘badly behaved’, whereas when men behaved similarly, they dubbed it a male prerogative. The constant need to keep in control of their emotions so as not to be stereotyped, resulted in few avenues through which women could release pressure and a greater accumulation of stress.

When questioned about the possible ways in which they could cope with the stress of ‘being women’, older women managers said that they had grown accustomed to the ways things were for women and there was little they could do about it as long as it was a ‘man’s world’. As they did not perceive their situation as ‘intolerable’ they believed they could continue to operate efficiently despite the potential disadvantages they suffered as females. It was some of the younger managers who, having had negative experiences because of their gender, showed greater concern about the position of women. They recognized that the obstacles they faced were not caused because of themselves, hence they did not need to look inside themselves but that the fault lay mainly in something outside them; mainly in the attitude of colleagues. (These remarks are surprising if one returns to the questionnaire survey findings which showed more men than women saw prejudice from colleagues as a barrier!). Whilst believing that attitudes could be changed, many of these women recognized that it would take a long time and be a difficult process. Some optimistically pointed out to changes in attitudes that had occurred over the past two decades. The feeling was that as women increasingly entered the ranks of management, and people got used to having them as managers, attitudes towards them would become more positive.

## **Organizational Structure barriers**

Significantly over a quarter of those women who believed there was no discrimination at work were either those who were relatively highly qualified or those who worked in areas where there was no competition from men, such as in finance. Discriminatory practices, either direct or subtle affected over half of the sample and this varied according to the industry they were employed in.

Several women in the public sector reported that organizational politics, while used to further the professional goals of men, had negative effects on their career development. Marshall (1984) has argued that women believe in honesty, authenticity and co-operation, and they consistently reject superficiality, putting on false appearance and aggression. The women in the sample felt that men, by making an impression and establishing good relationships with the right people with the ability to promote them, ensured their career success, whereas if women behaved themselves in a more natural way, as men do with men, the ill-effects would impinge not only on their work alone but their characters and reputations as well. A woman manager who had worked for a government agency for 32 years had this to say:

I have seen right here men making disparaging remarks about a particular boss, yet when he came in a few minutes later, they ran up to him, smiling, bowing, taking his briefcase; in general, they were onto their usual bootlicking behaviour. I was disgusted. It may appear trivial or petty, but these things do affect professional opportunities. Now imagine if I did the same things, the next day it would be put about that I am having an affair with the boss. (Respondent # 26).



A consequence of this is that women cannot (and don't wish to) cultivate a relationship with their superiors, as men do, which can affect how they are assessed.

Researchers in women in management studies are in agreement on the fact that many of the informal network's transactions, referred to as the 'men's room' or the 'old boy's network' are exclusively male territory and that through them, men achieve a closeness which women managers cannot hope to emulate or penetrate. Unlike the British study however (Coe, 1992), wherein women managers perceived the men's club as the single biggest barrier to the progress of their career, the same did not attract a significant response among Thai women in the sample.

The proportion who perceived no barrier in this respect, was relatively high (36 per cent) and these were predominantly women who were younger, single and employed in three functional specializations; marketing, public relations and general management. These 'new generation' women were among those whose work consisted of dealing with people, entertaining customers/clients after office hours and who felt that drinking with male colleagues facilitated their careers. Several women in this group had actually built up their sales and personal networks by socialising with their male colleagues after office hours. Several of the women also frequented bowling alleys and squash courts and two had taken up golf. These women clearly appreciated the importance of their participation in male networks and placed a high priority on their membership.

Older and married female executives, in more traditional specializations reported feeling uncomfortable about mixing socially with male groups from work. They had

occasionally tried to break into the all-male networks but were afraid that their behaviour would be misconstrued by others in their organizations as well as cause problems for them at home. Several questioned 'what will my husband think?', 'who will see to the children?', 'what will be said about me in the office?'. It was not that these women discounted the importance of the old-boys network and its effects on their career advancement. They were women raised within the more traditional trappings of Thai culture who believed that a woman's leisure time must be spent with her family.

Many of the informal networks' norms and conventions have been developed in all-male communities and settings. For Thai men, a visit to bars (staffed by attractive bar girls) or a massage parlour may serve as places to develop a buddy-buddy relationship but women find it difficult to join men in these places and in certain places such as massage parlours, they are not welcome.

Overall there appeared to be greater difficulties for women in the public sector to break through old-boy networks than their younger and often more extrovert counterparts in the private firms. Dhiravegin (1985) explains the complexities underpinning the promotions and career advancement patterns of the Thai public sector elite:

Human relationships in a bureaucracy are based upon certain established patterns. A Thai bureaucrat learns how to address his or her superiors with varying deferential 'pronouns'. He also learns how to stand or sit properly when talking or listening to his superiors....he learns to smile and laugh and while listening to his boss, nod his head to show his attentiveness..... he rushes to his boss's car to open the door for him (p.150).



It is apparent that the behaviours depicted here are typical of male subordinates towards their male bosses. Moreover the tendency in the bureaucracy to recruit people who graduated from the same schools and universities creates a military-style old boys networks in which personalism is used as a base for promotion and from which women are excluded. Because many women in the public sector attended single sex schools and female-dominated courses at universities, deprivation of ordinary interaction with the opposite sex during the formative years has introduced additional tensions in the relationship between men and women.

### **Organizational Processes Barriers**

In most cases, this barrier varied according to the age and background, employing industry as well as number of years in the specific position. A total of 21 per cent of the sample acknowledged no 'barriers' in this regard. Many of these women were young, aged 30-40. well-educated, generally holding MBAs, were employed in women-dominated industry, i.e., financial institutes and banks in the private sector and had 2-3 jobs before being appointed to their present positions. These women also stated that if their present firms' did not afford them the kind of training and promotions they were looking for, they would quit to take up more challenging offers.

A large proportion of women in both sectors had experienced barriers, especially those related to opportunities and many felt this stemmed from lack of training. Several women who had come up through the ranks before assuming their present posts felt

that their firms had promoted them to fill up gaps and had left them to learn the intricacies of their tasks through experience rather than offering adequate training. Ironically, women in marketing who had been offered several training courses said that their firms appointed more males to challenging assignments after the training because men were more mobile and could go on upcountry trips without prior notice. When these women were asked if they would be prepared to travel in order to get themselves similar assignments, several said they had offered to go but there had been reluctance on the part of management to send them. One woman explained:

I know my career prospects would be enhanced if I could do field work in the provinces. For myself, I am ready to go and I feel confident of my ability to convince upcountry customers. But whenever I've asked my boss replies, 'it's not safe, it's inconvenient. How would I know whether or not I can cope if I am not presented with the opportunity? (Respondent # 19).

That women are willing to travel but not allowed to do so and are held back in their promotions because of their 'immobility', seems particularly perplexing to women who had graduated in the same batch and had gone through similar management training as their male counterparts, many of whom had progressed to a level far higher than they, in the firms they were employed in. One woman marketer told of the bitterness she felt when her male classmate in the MBA programme who had entered the firm at the same time as she did had been promoted recently to vice-president, whereas she was still stuck in her brand manager position. She said:

To think that he was the one always asking me for my notes and solutions. And his grade point average (GPA) was even lower than mine at graduation. Males get the plum jobs, women don't get them. (Respondent # 23).



Taking the women's professional life into consideration, it should be noted that many of these academically high-performing females had found the early stages of their careers limited. Although they managed to get good jobs in large organizations, after the initial stint as trainee managers, they were often assigned to functions in which their pace of progress was slower than their male colleagues. For a few women, the start had been promising but having come through to middle management, they found they were stuck with few opportunities to enter senior management. This was evident particularly among women in the public sector, many of whom felt they would retire in their present posts despite their ability and qualifications.

In addition, limited access to information about vacancies at higher levels was cited by women as being responsible for organizational immobility. For women, the main source of information is made up of their superiors and subordinates, unlike men, who apart from these two sources, also gathered information from friends and colleagues. Generally women learn about vacant posts accidentally because they are not sufficiently informed nor do they get any help in obtaining adequate information. This is more so at the higher levels where men are privileged because their appointment to a post depends on close and confidential male relations. The fact that it is men who also decide among themselves how the higher ranked positions should be staffed together with the women's limited opportunities to socialize with influential people could explain why the women's rate of progress has been far slower than their male counterparts.

It was women in public sector jobs who mentioned blocked career paths arising from their performances being inadequately or unfairly evaluated. A large proportion of the women reportedly had never been shown their evaluations after they had been completed by their superiors, let alone, being offered a chance to comment or challenge the contents. When asked whether the same practice was prevalent where males were concerned, several women believed it was, however, they did not hesitate to mention that given the close ties that existed between male managers and superiors, it was not uncommon for men to receive a higher amount of feedback on their work as well as confidential information on performance ratings and promotion prospects.

Lastly, a few women reported of the hostility directed at them by both superiors and subordinates of either gender, who saw them as 'trespassers' and used every opportunity to undermine their ability. These women were not able to comprehend whether it was envy or their colleagues' inability to cope with females as managers, that prompted such behaviour. Two of the women found that they had, since their promotion to middle management, become the focus for aggressive behaviour, blame or attack and explained how their colleagues were eagerly awaiting a chance to trip them up:

When I was promoted to this post three years ago, my male boss said, 'Oh, I shall have to keep my eye on you, I don't want you embarrassing me. He constantly did things to sabotage my work and make me look stupid. Why? Because as I learned later, he wanted his friend in this position and I didn't fit into his scheme of things.(Respondent # 41).

There is institutional discrimination here. They know my capability and because I was the first female in a high position, they kept me as a 'acting' manager for months. Things I said at meetings were turned down or laughed at . I have developed a thicker skin, just being in this company. (Respondent # 33).



On the other hand, women who worked in organizations where gender subordination was less pronounced, gave accounts of maintaining good relationships with both male and female senior executives who recognized their superior skills and helped to create sound and healthy working environments in the firms they worked in. Several said that they had never encountered discrimination because they were women and insisted it was not gender but outstanding performances that mattered. In fact, several believed that because of their gender, they were clearly at an advantage, for example, men were more helpful and co-operative, they were more considerate and treated women with respect, and the preference of certain client groups for women helped increase their credibility and self-confidence.

### **Future Directions for Thai Women Managers**

When women were asked how they saw career patterns emerging for Thai women managers in the future, over half seemed optimistic and assumed there would be a decline in discrimination, as more women entered into management positions. However when further questioned if they were equally optimistic about their promotion into senior management positions, only 23 per cent of the sample said they had a chance. It must be remembered that the majority of those who were optimistic were from the finance and banking industry in which the numbers of men and women are almost equal at entry level but which has more women than men in senior management positions (Business Review, October 1995).

Women in other functional areas believed that despite the encouraging economic and social climate in Thailand and the steep increase in the number of women into management, it would be slow progress for women aiming for top positions. Yet when questioned if they saw the need for the introduction of equal opportunities legislation as in the West, less than 10 per cent of the women answered in the affirmative. Some women expressed the view that changes to Thai women's labour market position would require major structural adjustments in the established employment systems and could take decades to achieve. Women felt that if organizations were serious about increasing the numbers of women, they ought to modify some of their core practices relating to women's employment, rather than depending on government action to reduce discrimination against women in general.

Although family commitments and lack of spousal support were seen as barriers, contrary to expectations, the women did not rank them as high as those arising from institutional/organizational practices and processes. The general feeling conveyed was that whereas paid domestic help and co-operation among family members in the sharing of household tasks could lower the barrier relating to work-family conflicts, there were no such short-term solutions for removing organizational barriers which women encounter. Two women expressed their views:

There is no point in asking women to go in for higher academic or vocational qualifications. I think Thai women are amply qualified, more so than men. But they are not offered adequate opportunities and this will not happen until the attitude of men at the top changes. (Respondent # 47).

The barriers to advancement for women are more complex than what most people imagine. Significant barriers are created from biases, subjective vs. objective opinions of performance, and lack of a clear,



consistent statement of the requirements for being a woman manager. The Thai corporate environment needs to change to support further advancement and retention of women. Simply learning how to cope better with our family responsibilities will not ensure progress if the environment remains non-supportive. (Respondent # 40).

## SUMMARY

The responses of the women managers show that they are not a homogeneous group and that differences can be attributed to their age, education, social position, as well as the sector they work in. Older women managers from more traditional backgrounds still gave credence to men's superiority in society, their role as breadwinners and leaders in the family. These women therefore, rationalized unequal practices that increase men's social opportunities and standing with concepts of biological difference between the sexes. Moreover as the larger proportion of those women who expressed these views were in the public sector, their responses fit in with the findings of the survey which showed that most of the Thai female government officials accepted the faster promotion of their male colleagues as 'natural' or even 'appropriate' (Suwapan, 1985:8). Ironically, judging from their remarks, it was the attitude of the same male subordinates, colleagues and bosses that created many of the obstacles they encountered in their jobs. Overall, it can be concluded that women managers in the public sector appeared more dissatisfied with their progress and quality of corporate life than their counterparts in private sector firms.

Attitudes favouring male domination appeared to be frowned on by younger, better-educated women managers who are trying to counteract traditional concepts with ideas that better reflect Thailand's economic development. Their opinion was that Thai

women, even those at the higher levels, lack consciousness about women's issues and do not question traditional patriarchal values and practices in the same way that women in Western countries do. The young generation managers also believe that women should also look for 'equality in the family', sharing domestic tasks and decision making. Their business education and skills, their male-like career patterns, their self-confidence and ambition, more importantly, their ability to take risks in making career moves, appear to have created for younger managers in private firms, many more opportunities for advancement and overall more satisfactory working environments. It was the contradiction of their situation, i.e., the need to resolve the conflict between their newly expanded aspirations and the social demands and pressures placed on them to conform to older values, that they saw as both challenging and difficult.

The materials presented in this chapter although largely descriptive in nature, has been able to relate in women's terms, their exact interpretation of situations or events. It becomes clear after reading the chapter, how differently women responded to issues on the questionnaire survey and to the same issues in face-to face interviews. This is not surprising if one recognizes that Thais prefer face-to-face communication, and are more willing to impart information of a sensitive nature through oral, rather than the written word. The women have so far, related their side of the story. In the following chapter, the findings of interviews with HR/Line explores the extent to which the attitudes of decision makers as well as the prevalent norms and policies has impacted the work lives of these women managers. It is only after obtaining a clearer picture of



all the major actors involved, that the themes and issues related to women managers can be fully presented.

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## **CHAPTER VIII**

### **INTERVIEWS WITH HRM/LINE MANAGERS**

The data obtained for this chapter is drawn from the interviews conducted with 25 (12 men and 13 women) HR/Line managers. A written questionnaire was provided which included direct questions about HR practices in the firm, the proportion of female managers, and the types of management function they occupied. The face-to face interview sought to ascertain the company's attitude to women's opportunities in the firm, such as mobility requirements, training programs and possible hazards and benefits related to the employment of women. The interviews were also designed to probe some of the issues highlighted by the interviews with women managers (reported in the previous chapter) and were used to test the proposition that women are under-represented in higher level managerial positions because of the 'macho' culture leading to sex-discriminatory practices in organizations.

**Some problems encountered during interviews:** Before presenting the data, a few comments on the interviewees and the interviewing process need to be made. First, nearly a quarter of the managers in the sample could not provide a booklet or any written form of their organizations' HR policies and practices. Some managers, especially in locally-owned firms which had no clearly organized HR/Personnel Departments said they had no documented form of their policies, others which had them, appeared reluctant to part with a copy. This caused a slight change in the structure of the interview; basic questions on recruitment and selection had to be asked and reported. Second, managers were clearly uncomfortable with some of the questions posed to them. This discomfort could arise from their lack of clear



information on how many women were actually employed in their company, and on their recruitment and selection as managers. Two managers in the sample actually suggested that I alter my questions and instead of asking about women, ask about employees in general. Third, the age and sex of the interviewee was an important determinant of the amount of information he/she was ready to disclose. Older male managers became suspicious, especially when asked to provide specific examples of their firms' staffing decisions, and refused to answer some of the questions. The cultural Thai tradition of younger persons showing respect to those who are older and in senior positions also did not permit too much probing or challenging of the answers these managers provided. Lastly, there was the tendency to provide 'socially acceptable' answers rather than a picture of what actually went on in organizations. This again can be attributed to the cultural concept of 'face' in Thailand. 'Face' and harmony are very important, and information that is likely to shake that image of harmony is not likely to be forthcoming. These limitations have influenced the way data is reported in this chapter.

## **HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICES IN FIRMS:**

From the responses provided by HR/Line managers on the structure of HR practices in their organizations, it was evident that there were several differences between firms. The differences become even more obvious when the practices in public sector organizations are compared with those in locally-owned private sector firms, and MNCs.

**Recruitment and Selection in Private Firms**

Respondents were asked to specify the methods of recruitment and the criteria they used to select managers in their firms. Press advertising, recruitment agents, head hunters and campus recruitment, were cited as sources. The respondents using these sources were then asked whether they had found one sex, rather than the other, to be more responsive to the vacancy announcement. The distribution of their responses are recorded in the following table.

**Table 8.1**  
**Which sex responds more to these recruitment methods? ( in percentage )**

	Press Ads	Agencies	Informal Channels	Campus
Male	33	27	16	30
Female	38	28	27	22
No Difference	26	30	42	35
Don't Know	3	15	15	13

The data in the table suggests that women cannot be said to be unresponsive to recruitment campaigns since for three of four methods, women are felt to be more responsive than males. Managers were then asked to name the most important criteria used for assessing managerial candidates and their responses are reported in Table 8.2



**Table 8.2**

**Criteria used for selecting managerial applicants (in percentage)**

Education	30
Experience	21
References	8
Personality	4
Person's sex	8
Interview / Test Results	29

The importance of education as a screening device for managerial applicants is apparent. A person's sex was considered important by some respondents who explained that certain jobs, i.e., Technical Supervisor, Operations Manager, Sales Engineer, etc. were those for which males were preferred. While sex and gender legislation make it illegal to advertise explicitly for someone of a particular gender or ethnic group in countries such as the US or UK, the absence of such legislation in Thailand renders it possible for newspaper advertisements to mention a preference for age or sex of the applicant. Since results of the interviews weighed so heavily in the manager's responses, they were asked additional questions concerning interview practices. Slightly over half the respondents reported that applicants were interviewed by their potential superior, the rest indicated that applicants took part in panel interviews. Only a quarter of sample reported that individuals involved in the interview process received any type of special training. When asked whether family background increased the chances of candidates getting selected, only two managers in Thai-owned

firms indicated that it was considered. For the majority, family background made no difference to the candidate's chances of being appointed as a manager.

Tests of critical reasoning, selection/employment interviews and to a certain extent, personality measures were the most common selection instruments used by the larger locally-owned and MNCs for managerial appointments. Six of the multinationals reported the use of assessment centres. None of the respondents indicated the use of aptitude, interest or projective tests. The majority of respondents in smaller firms maintained that the use of sophisticated techniques in recruitment/selection, even for managers, were not justified. Respondents were asked to rank the importance of several criteria in the selection of middle-level managers. Criteria considered highly important were past performance (62 per cent), team work (59 per cent), administrative/leadership skills (52 per cent) and commitment to the organization (43 per cent).

There appears to be two significant differences in the recruitment and selection patterns of MNCs and locally-owned firms. First, hiring practices in the former were highly standardized, often patterned after that used by headquarters in the hiring of managers. For instance, most MNCs employed job analysis procedures to identify the knowledge, skills or abilities that were likely to predict who would perform well on a specific job. In contrast, at least four of the privately-owned firms recruited the individual into the organization first, before assigning him/her to a specific job. Second, language skills are more important in the selection criteria of foreign firms. Thus in selecting local managers and professionals, MNCs ensure that the applicants are fluent



English speakers, preference is given to those graduating from universities in the UK, US, and Australia, or those who have worked for foreign firms before.

### **Promotion from within**

Respondents in private firms indicated that approximately 80 per cent of managerial jobs were filled from within. External recruitment was resorted to only when no suitable candidates were identified or when the job entailed a relatively new specialization. Interestingly, whereas firms in the past 'poached' only highly-qualified male managers, especially in marketing, the new trend for firms is to poach certain highly-trained senior and middle-level women managers who are generally well-known in their field of expertise. Overall, slightly half the sample of managers in private firms admitted to using head-hunting firms to find appropriate managers for specific functions.

### **Informal Networks:**

Most respondents from multinationals claimed they did not employ informal networks in the selection process. Managers in locally-owned firms however, admitted that this factor could not be ruled out. Almost all of the respondents from such firms believed that personal friendship with high-level managers was important for selecting supervisors. Referrals from current employees as well as relatives in high-ranking positions were sometimes alternative sources of recruitment in these firms. As mentioned in Chapter II, social networks are used extensively for selecting managerial

and professional employees in private firms in Thailand because it is felt that such a practice tends to promote organizational attachment and facilitate internal working (Lawler et al, 1989). It can be recalled that the respondents from private firms who answered the questionnaire (Chapter IV) also spoke of '*faaq*' (using an influential person's help) as an informal means of obtaining jobs in their firms.

### **Recruitment and selection in the public sector**

Public administration has a set entry system which is more objective than the private sector method, because the system of competitive public examinations take account solely of one's knowledge in the field. Private firms, on the other hand, place emphasis on candidates' past performance and development potential, both factors which are open to subjectivity and which public competitive exams do not consider. The majority of public enterprises recruit from the pool of social science (public administration, political science, philosophy) and arts (legislation, history, education) graduates, and since most of these are women, there are more women (52 per cent) in the civil service than men. The Civil Service Examination qualifies a person for a managerial position, it does not however guarantee a person promotion. All successful candidates start their work careers at entry-level and ascend slowly. At levels 1 and 2 (C1 and C2) male applicants predominate in jobs as technicians, electricians and surveyors whereas women are directed towards positions as clerks, typists, general service and accounting assistants. It was hardly surprising therefore that the locations in which public sector women managers were found (Chapter VI) were in administration, personnel, and accounting.



### **Promotion from within**

Without exception, internal promotion was used in public sector enterprises to upgrade the status of those employees who possessed adequate job experience (seniority) and who displayed the skills required for performing on the job. No posts were filled through external recruitment, although there were several horizontal movements between government agencies.

### **.Other differences between firms in HR practices:**

Human resource management practices varied in the organizations depending on the type of business, ownership structure, size, age and nationality of the companies. Many medium and some large Thai-owned firms did not have specialized HR functions, the average size of the department was small and the level of professionalism low. In contrast, most MNCs had well-developed HR departments with management development programs, employee orientation, performance reviews and job evaluation. Few locally-owned companies conducted job evaluations and even though there were annual performance reviews, these were of a less formal nature than that of MNCs. The respondents in the public sector were asked to indicate the purpose of conducting performance reviews. The most important reasons were for making promotion decisions, for human resource planning, for determining training needs, and for making compensation decisions. In contrast, in MNCs, performance reviews were conducted mainly for making compensation decisions, for making promotion decisions,

and for training and development purposes. With regard to the attitude towards employees, MNCs and a few large Thai-owned firms showed greater concern with developing a conciliatory management-staff relationship than did smaller local firms and those in the public sector. For example, most MNCs encouraged staff from all levels of management to participate in the planning process. In local firms, the leadership style was authoritarian and decision making remained the prerogative of top management. Locally-owned firms on the whole, had higher turnover rates for managers, a factor that can be attributed to their comparatively ineffective selection function, the lack of training programs and less favourable pay and working conditions.

## **THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT**

From the organizational structure perspective, women's positions in organizational opportunity structures, the amount of power they exert, and their numerical distribution, were variables that were considered critical to explaining why women are not progressing upwards. The proportion of women in management, according to the data obtained from respondents varied according to the nature of the firm, the industry in which it operated, and the attitudes of senior managers towards women. Slightly over half the firms in the private sector had 18 - 27 per cent of managerial positions filled by women. In two of the firms, this number rose to 40 per cent. Differences also existed in the number of women managers between large and medium-sized firms. In larger firms, employing over 20,000 persons, there appeared to be more women managers. As the public sector enterprises chosen were among those employing more women than men, women occupied between a quarter to 40 per cent of all



management positions. What was common among all firms in the sectors was that women were congregated in the lower and mid-management levels. They formed only between 3 -5 per cent of senior management in private firms, and between 4 - 11 per cent in the public enterprises. Managers from only six private and one public sector organization said they had women as general managers, managing directors, partners or senior policy making executives. Overall, there was a minimal participation of women in production, technical selling and maintenance. Only one out of eight manufacturing firms in the sample, had women in any of these positions.

There appeared to be a disparity of practice within each industry's classification on the utilization of women for management positions. Financial institutions, insurance, sales and merchandising presented the greatest opportunities for women, with firms in these industries employing women in more than 20 per cent of managerial positions. Manufacturing and construction firms did not utilize women managers to the same degree as firms in the service industry. For instance, the percentage of women in banking and financial institutions utilizing women for 20 -50 per cent of managerial positions was three times higher than for manufacturing firms in the sample.

In questioning the respondents about why the incidence of women managers in finance, banking and insurance was so high and growing rapidly, four possible explanations were offered. First, the number of eligible female candidates for management positions in finance is increasing because more women have completed accounting and finance specialized programs in Thai and foreign universities and have accumulated sufficient experience to qualify for higher level jobs. Second, Thailand's relatively high saving

rates were in part due to women having control over the family's purse strings, women therefore are seen as having an advantage in managing investments from the marketing point of view. Thirdly, women are better at foreign languages than men, a key skill when dealing with international money markets. Lastly, Thai women are perceived as having superior interpersonal ability and because they are seen as more trustworthy than men, they offer firms a strategic advantage when it comes to the marketing of financial and investment packages.

### **Respondents' explanations for women's representation in management**

When managers were asked what functions/areas they considered women unsuitable for management, most of those in the service sector indicated that women are suitable for any management function. Four managers, all of whom were in manufacturing firms indicated that there were certain positions that they did not assign women to. They were 1) jobs that required high levels of technical skills 2) jobs that required frequent assignments outside the office and 3) jobs in which the personal safety of women could not be guaranteed.

The general belief of managers was that women's exclusion from the production management and technical ranks can be attributed in large part, to their inexperience, their educational training and background and also their reluctance towards managing an often off-city, and largely male workforce. One line manager's comments on the only women engineer in the company's off-city plant did not appear optimistic:

Frankly speaking, it is not a job for a woman. She will have to manage almost 150 male employees, 90 per cent of whom are from rural areas. No doubt she is well-qualified, and has had training abroad, nonetheless



the job hazards are many. If she were my wife, I would ask her to refuse the position (Respondent # 12).

A more optimistic picture was found among MNCs where the majority of firms provided opportunities for women managers, especially in marketing, finance, R & D and Personnel. Managers in these firms strongly emphasized their firms' policies of 'recruiting the best people' rather than continuing the traditional pattern of limiting recruitment to men. In many locally-owned firms, managers admitted that personal relationships are considered important and stereotypes about management as a male domain still influences staffing decisions. However, respondents in western-based MNCs' maintained that since their evaluation of employees was based primarily on objective criteria, there was less tendency towards discrimination in recruiting and promoting women.

### **Hazards Of Hiring/Promoting Women As Managers**

Although the majority of managers expressed support for the idea of increasing the number of women in management, there were some hesitant and some straight-forward responses when asked whether there were hazards related to hiring/promoting women. What was very much in evidence was that HR managers, of both sexes, were basing their responses on the performance effectiveness of those women already in executive positions in their firms. The difference in outlook between managers in the sample, appears to support the conclusion that companies which had experience with successful women managers have a greater tendency to be favourable and perceived no hazards in hiring and promoting women as managers. The majority of managers in

companies which had few or no women managers indicated greater difficulties with their hiring/promotion. The responses here are organized under the three major perspectives in the ensuing paragraphs.

## **GENDER-CENTRED PERSPECTIVE**

**Women have inadequate technical skills:** The majority of managers who perceived this as a detriment on the part of women were in manufacturing. These managers argued that the vocational choices of women at university level, mainly social science, did not suit their organizational needs. The literature shows that as increasingly more men opt for technology and engineering in graduate school, the number of women in these areas has not risen significantly (Xuto et al, 1994). This means there are comparatively few women with business training, skills or work experience immediately relevant to the manufacturing industry. Managers were reminded that there were some female graduates in technology and engineering who obtained higher grades than their male counterparts in Thai universities and asked whether these women would be given equal opportunities for selection in manufacturing firms. The responses were mixed but the overall implication that 'men are preferred for manufacturing jobs' is quite evident. Some of the responses are reproduced below:

If she had the right potential she'd be given the chance, but would have to work so much harder. What she would need is a strong personality and not be frightened of working with a totally male management and workforce. (Respondent # 3).

Academic qualifications alone do not make a person a manager. Management is still perceived as a male world; if women want to become managers, they are expected to perform as well as men. What is important is for them to understand the rules of the game. (Respondent # 15)



I can't answer the question, I don't really know. I guess the people at the top think that women don't make good production managers. A woman, especially a young one, can become the victim of an unscrupulous group. Or she could have problems while disciplining an unruly male workforce. A few years ago, a well-qualified woman applied for a job in production but she was not selected, and I guess it was largely because she was a woman. (Respondent #6)

**Women's lack of geographical mobility:** The managers who mentioned this did not see this issue as a limiting factor in the same way as is understood in Western literature, i.e., a married woman's inability to relocate to a different geographical area on account of her husband's career. The fact that the large majority of management jobs are located in one city, Bangkok, precludes this idea. Rather, managers in certain industries indicated that mobility/travelling upcountry and abroad (often at short notice) was an important criteria for promotion and that women were not as mobile as their male colleagues. Interestingly, during interviews reported in the previous chapter, women managers mentioned that they were not sent on assignments upcountry/abroad, even though they had indicated their willingness to travel. This demonstrates that the immobility of women is often used as an excuse for not promoting or assigning women to mainstream jobs.

**Women lack drive and motivation for management:** Another argument advanced by some managers in the sample was that Thai women managers lack motivation to manage. These managers believe that women gave overriding priority to their family commitments and thus were not able to manage their work requirements. Some of the other factors mentioned were that women were less able to handle a crisis, were overly sensitive to criticism and were not strong enough in their decision-making ability to

meet the demands of management. Significantly, the majority of women respondents in the sample said that it was not drive as much as the motivation to manage that Thai women lacked. They elaborated that the intensive demands of a management job, the practice of long working hours as a sign of commitment and the lack of organizational measures to ease women's career constraints are tantamount to putting women 'off' management careers.

The idea that Thai women managers are not career-orientated and do not want promotions into management is not consistent with the findings from the interviews reported in Chapter VII wherein a relatively large proportion of women, in both sectors, had very positive attitudes, and showed high levels of motivation towards furthering their careers. The managerial characteristics valued by the companies (particularly in some types of firms) do conform to a male model of management. There is some support therefore for the notion that women are underrepresented in management because the cultures of the organizations are biased against them.

### **How far can women in management go ?**

Respondents were asked the ultimate position in the hierarchy to which women in their firms could aspire. More than half the respondents in both sectors maintained that women could go as high as the board level in their firms. When further questioned about the number of women currently holding top management positions, managers admitted that the numbers were rather low and in some firms, virtually non-existent. Some reasons for the low percentage of women in senior management were offered.



Firstly, women managers were more interested in challenging work and achievement and less orientated than men towards goals of money and power. This could occur because the majority of Thai married women managers were not primary breadwinners, and hence tended not to be put under pressure either by their firms or families to seek promotion. Thus when a job is not attractive in itself, women turned it down, irrespective of the pay and status that go with it. Second, women tended to reject top management jobs because of the risk that accompanies the venture into new and unfamiliar territory. Top management jobs are those which many Thai women associate with overload, lack of balance in personal life and even loneliness. One female HR manager had an example:

Our company was ready to promote a talented, highly-qualified woman as a director. But she refused the promotion saying that she would lose her friends, many of whom had joined the firm at the same time as she. She strongly believed their attitude towards her would change once she became their boss. (Respondent # 14).

The third and perhaps the most important reason why women refuse top jobs was in the opinion of the sample, their family commitments. Previous chapters have pointed to the fact that Thai women tend to give their family responsibilities a higher priority than their work, and try not to get into situations where their job commitments would exceed the time and effort they can spare from their families. The interviews in the previous chapter also revealed that married women managers appear, where their responsibility to employers is concerned, to be a particularly conscientious group. The respondents believed that if these women found the double load overpowering, they would not hesitate to refuse a promotion. Furthermore, in the Thai context, women

tend to avoid situations in which they were superior in rank, pay or even professional skills than their husbands. In the previous chapter it was revealed that women managers still have sensitivities towards the ideal of the male as major breadwinner and were concerned for their husbands' feelings of self-esteem and self-worth in a world which still largely views this as the male's primary function within the family. Thus there seems to be some basis for the HR managers' views.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE PERSPECTIVE**

In this section, three issues are examined. First, the organizational opportunities that are opening up for women; second, respondents' attitudes towards women as managers and third, the anticipated and actual problems associated with the employment of women as managers. Although the last two, a measurement of attitudes and the problems- anticipated and actual, are a result of all three perspectives outlined in the literature, they are reported here because they influence both the opportunities available to women in organizations, and the treatment they receive in them.

**New opportunities for women in organizations:** As mentioned earlier, Thailand has not enacted equal opportunities legislation of the kind found in Japan, Korea or Western countries. Hence only a relatively small proportion of managers in the sample said their companies had any special provisions for the employment of women. Over half of the firms to which the managers belonged either had not taken any action or were unclear about their future policies for women in job assignments and promotions. Yet when questioned about whether men and women had equal opportunities within



their organizations, slightly over three-quarters of the sample (all respondents from the MNCs and 2 out of 3 public enterprises) responded in the affirmative. For the majority of managers, equal opportunities meant opening up jobs that were traditionally done by men, to women. Nearly a quarter of the managers said their firms had opened up all job categories to women, and the rest said they had only opened up some of the traditionally male jobs to women in the areas of finance, marketing and sales. Most of what were opened were in fact specialist jobs which required some kind of technical or specialist skill.

A human resource problem for managers in both sectors concerned the high percentage of voluntary turnovers among male managers. A shortage of skilled male managerial talent, particularly in a rapidly developing economy, had caused firms to recruit more highly-qualified women and train them as specialists and experts. This strategy had been pursued by firms in the early 1980s, when Thailand underwent rapid economic expansion. Thus, it can be argued that it was not in the name of equal opportunities that firms opened positions to women but to guarantee their own survival in times of intense competition.

### **Attitudes towards women in management**

Since human attitudes are gained through association and experience, this section of the interview sought to explore the attitudes of executives towards women based on the interrelationship between length of service in management positions and associations with women as peers, subordinates and superiors.

Seven showcards containing statements about women managers were shown to respondents and they were asked to select from among 4 answers; strongly disagree, disagree, agree and strongly agree.

**Showcard #1: A woman manager would be accepted by male/female superiors only after she has been given unusually difficult challenges in order to prove herself.**

More than half the respondents agreed with this statement, including all the women represented in the sample. That women have indeed to be better to get ahead has been demonstrated both in the literature as well as the interviews with women reported in the previous chapter. As one women HR manager employed in a MNC put it: 'women have to be better, they can't afford to make the mistakes men can. If they do, they are never allowed to forget it'. Statements such as these, support the respondents' view that women must be superwomen; highly qualified and achieving, before they are hired or promoted. The contention of several respondents in a previous section that women lack drive to manage seems suspicious in light of their response to the above statement. If women must be above-average and if they are given unusually difficult assignments before being promoted, then companies are discriminating against them. By expecting women to carry out these assignments in order to be accepted/promoted, means firms are *institutionalizing double standards*, setting unrealistic goals for women and allowing mediocrity to become solely the privilege of men.

**Showcard # 2 : In general, women managers are pushy, loud and argumentative and have annoying and offensive habits.**

The responses to this statement are quite interesting. None of the managers in the sample strongly agreed, however, six men and three women respondents agreed with



the statement. Obviously with such views, these managers are going to have problems dealing with women in managerial positions. It must be mentioned that most of those who agreed, were managers in the older age group. These managers recalled an older 'battle-axe' generation of women who were among the first to break through into management and who were very forceful in their approach. One male manager believed that this forcefulness emerged out of the peculiar specialization and remarked that 'women in marketing are too militant and arrogant'. Another woman manager who indicated that 'some women managers are over the top' blamed it on Western education and influence. She elaborated, 'I don't mean that women should be timid, but they are Thai and should behave according to our cultural heritage, have a certain sense of propriety'.

**Showcard # 3: Women tend to be less competitive and forceful in both their work and in pursuing their careers than males.**

Approximately half of the sample agreed with the statement, particularly those in public sector enterprises. Although in the previous question, nine managers had described women as pushy with aggressive tendencies, the general idea among those agreeing with the above statement was that, with few exceptions, the majority of women managers fail to impose their authority, hesitate when making tough decisions and lack the persuasive skills necessary to sell their ideas, both for the job they are doing or for promoting their own careers. Several managers argued that women who wanted to head tougher line management positions ought to be more authoritative in their approach. Comments from women in the sample also demonstrated that women are uncomfortable in positions of authority, more so when it comes to giving orders to men. A woman manager working in HR for several years, shared her observations

about women in management, commenting that they prefer the planning, organization and co-ordinating functions inherent in their positions as managers but disliked the leading and controlling functions. She further stated that Thai women who succeed were those who were not just outstanding in their jobs, they were conscious of their image, made themselves known to the right people and heard in the right places, in other words, they had a high degree of visibility.

Manager who disagreed with the statement were quick to point out that the new generation of women who had entered management in the last decade, were those with the right combination of femininity (critical in the Thai context) and forcefulness, both on the job and in promoting their own careers. The problem, one male manager argued is that 'women are victims either way; if they do not act forcefully, they are overlooked, if they do, they are criticised as unfeminine and impolite in the Thai context'.

**Showcard # 4: In general, women managers are too emotional to make competent decisions in the firm.**

Slightly less than half the respondents agreed with the statement, two managers strongly agreed. The observations shared by the respondents were that men were emotionally more stable, had greater objectivity and logical reasoning and were definitely more confident and certain of their decisions. Both male and female respondents commented on women's tendency towards egotism rather than reason. These findings are consistent with those reported by Siengthai et al (1994) that senior executives typically view Thai women as weak, indecisive, emotional, dependent and less productive than men.



Those refuting the statement argued that emotionalism was not gender-specific and more a matter of stereotyping. One woman manager in a public enterprise remarked, 'Why is being emotional only referred to in females? Men are not exempt from emotion, they tend to be irritable, moody and at times, explosive'. Another female line manager argued that it was women's personalized, more loosely-structured style of working that was perceived as emotional. She believed that it was not that women were more emotional but the situation that made them so. Because women often felt insecure and lacked credibility in their roles as managers, the tension caused them to appear emotional. In this, she was echoing the views of Kanter who argued that it was one's position, not one's sex, which determined actions and traits in organizational settings.

**Showcard # 5: Women managers are likely to be overly concerned about details, reluctant to delegate and better at routine rather than creative tasks.**

A quarter of all respondents agreed with the statement. Women were seen as tending to be more conscientious and ethical than men, exercising greater patience in handling details and more suited to jobs requiring these attributes, i.e., accounting, finance and computer operations. As male managers were recruited mainly for production, marketing and general management, they are called in to cover a wider field, to be less detailed-orientated and to develop a wider view. As mentioned earlier, women were perceived to be less creative than men, therefore, they were likely to provide a better flow of candidates for middle and junior management jobs and for routine, rather than policy-making assignments.

Besides, several of those disagreeing with the above statement, pointed out that women were under closer scrutiny by superiors, peers, subordinates and clients than

are men and subsequently, tend to pay more attention to the details of their jobs rather than risk mistakes. The advantages of being meticulous were seen in the way women observed office hours, were punctual, did not miss meetings and even stayed late to wrap up their duties after office hours.

Almost all the respondents believed that women were better at training subordinates in the intricacies of the task. Indeed in the interview findings, women managers admitted receiving better coaching from women superiors than men. However, when it comes to delegation, several respondents felt that women find it discomfiting because they still lacked skills in handling male-female relationships effectively. In the Thai context, this included avoiding status confrontation with men. Women, therefore ended up adopting a deferential non-aggressive style while dealing with men, especially those older than themselves, which in turn, resulted in a tradition of overtime and overload in their work.

**Showcard # 6 In general, firms are reluctant to hire and promote women into important managerial positions because they are a bad risk**

In the view of a vast majority of managers who strongly disagreed with the statement, few firms would refuse to hire/promote a woman on the grounds that she might marry and quit, or quit after childbirth. Indeed, respondents pointed out to two factors that often posed as barriers to women in the West but which were not perceived as such in Thailand. One, where many firms in the West hesitate to promote a married woman because of the likelihood she would quit if her husband were transferred, no such problem arose in Thailand because most jobs were Bangkok-based. Second, time off and provisions for childcare are not as critical or important for Thai women as among their western counterparts, because most women have household assistance and/or



relatives who lived-in. Given the high percentage of male mobility, not only in the labour force but to a high degree among male executives, respondents felt that their firms had rewarded women with sufficient capabilities and motivation with promotions, and women in general, had evidenced greater permanency in their jobs than men. Several respondents cited examples of male managers quitting only to be replaced for the first time by women, such experiments proving rewarding both for the woman and the firm. A senior HR woman manager expressed her view by analogy:

‘Suppose there are two holiday destinations you can choose from, a popular island resort and a faraway, unknown location, one would probably choose the former, thus cutting out the time, effort and risk involved in the decision. For most firms, women are similar to the unknown destination. For years, firms have hired men and continue to do so to avoid risk. But if they are far-sighted enough, the unknown destination could prove to be a far better choice’. (Respondent # 22).

**Showcard # 7 Women are not accepted as business partners, peers or superiors in the same way as are men.**

Negative attitudes towards women in business still persist as was evidenced from the responses of nearly one-quarter of the sample, who indicated their agreement with the statement. Women were more likely to receive acceptance as managers in fields which were women-dominated, i.e., personnel, accounting, finance and administration. In functions dominated by males, i.e., engineering or general management, respondents indicated that the prospect of a female, both as a peer and as boss, was not wholly accepted, despite exceptional qualifications. This implies that males resent the idea of women managers from the standpoint of their own expectation for promotion in fields which they saw as ‘theirs’ but did not mind if women were promoted in functions that were female-dominated.

Research has shown a general tendency for both sexes to be more likely to prefer a man rather than a woman as superior. Respondents cautioned against over-generalizing in this respect however, stating that the degree of preference depended on the job assignment as well as the age of the specific woman. Men were preferred on assignments which required dealing with other men or those in which clients preferred conducting their business with men, those which required external supervision and those that are risky. Age was also mentioned as a determinant because in a Thai family, a woman's authority increased with age; women managers tended to have an easier time supervising young male subordinates who relate to them as elder sisters. Overall, a majority of respondents agreed that there was prejudice against women as bosses, several respondents of both sexes, arguing that women who were not certain of their own status and authority, often created problems of insecurity, strife and inferiority among those whom they managed.

To further explore the attitude of the sample towards women on the management team, respondents were asked their views on the topic of women as peers. There appeared to be mixed reaction, with almost half believing that women in management are accepted as peers and the other half, disagreeing. Most of the latter were women respondents in manufacturing, construction and entertainment industries. These women appear to have experienced the resentment of their male colleagues to a greater degree than had women in other industries. Several respondents pointed out that it was also likely that women disapproved of other women as peers. One senior HR women manager explained:

'The peer relationship depends a lot on whether men and women understand and accept each other's motives and interests. If they are in competition for the same resources and promotions, things may



appears smooth on the surface (the Thai tendency to avoid confrontation) but resentment will be lurking below, of that you can be sure'.  
(Respondent # 7).

Overall, it was younger, better-educated male managers in certain industries who held more tolerant views of women as peers. It is also significant that the majority of awkward situations mentioned in the interviews with women managers, involved complaints of prejudicial treatment by men, rather than male rejection of women as peers.

### **Problems - Anticipated And Actual**

It has been argued by social scientists that particular characteristics of various types of firms contribute to different employment policies towards women. For example, the current study finds the percentage of managerial positions filled by women to be greater in non-manufacturing than in manufacturing firms. In this section, respondents were asked for their views on the problems they anticipated would result from the promotion of women in management. The assumption here is that if a company anticipates many problems in this respect, it would not favour women at all in its hiring/promotion policies. A breakdown of responses in percentage is given in Table 8.3

**Table 8.3**  
**PROBLEMS - ANTICIPATED AND ACTUAL**

<b>Problems</b>	<b>Major</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>None at all</b>
Resistance by male managers	-	12	24	64
Opposition from society	-	-	4	96
Lack of suitably-qualified women to fill management slot	3	24	4	4
Lower productivity/efficiency in departments managed by women	-	8	12	80
Poor customer relations where women have to deal with clients	4	20	24	52
Resistance from subordinates	-	12	28	60
Not enough suitable management positions for women	24	8	16	52

Resistance from male managers was not anticipated as a problem by the majority of the sample. Those who saw it as 'some' or a 'minor' problem were industries in which males dominated the hierarchy. When further questioned about the level at which resistance to women managers is strongest, most felt that it was strongest at the upper-middle and senior levels. A woman HR manager expressed the view that men feel threatened, fear women more and as a result become antagonistic as women climb to higher levels as opposed to lower levels where, despite having more day to day contact with women managers, there are still plenty of jobs to go around. The respondents who indicated that they saw no resistance at all, were those who indicated their firms were strongly committed to equality of opportunities, not surprisingly most of them were multinationals. The majority of respondents did not perceive opposition from society as a problem. Although a woman's realm in Thailand is principally defined as a domestic one, families have always been considered as economic units in which women have been expected to make a contribution.

Lack of suitably qualified women to fill managerial positions was seen as a 'major', 'some' and 'minor' problem depending on the type of industry the respondent belonged to. The argument that women lack the education, technical and professional knowledge and experience to do a job properly has been one which male managers have used most often. Their rationale is that women are rejected and still are, based not on gender or cultural bias but because they lack the qualifications. In short, opportunities exist, but women cannot fill them. Nevertheless, studies show that women managers are often better educated than their male counterparts. Also as we have seen in a previous section, it was not uncommon for male managers to reject



highly qualified women in certain industries/sectors. It can be argued that the primary function of education for business is a socializing one and most of the necessary training is learned not in business schools but by performing the intricacies of managerial work. It is also true to say that many managers hold positions not directly related to their field of study. So what might be of critical importance here is not the educational qualifications of women *per se*, but the extent to which specific job training is made a prerequisite for females, and not for males in their entry into managerial positions.

Only two HR managers admitted to 'some', and three, to 'minor' problems related to lower productivity/efficiency in departments run by women. On probing further, some respondents felt that marketing was a department which could most likely be better managed by a male manager. Factors such as the working hours, intense involvement in extra-work activities, high geographical mobility and socialization with clients and colleagues after office hours were seen as necessary components of the job and one in which, women would have to make several compromises, especially if they were married.

There was a mixed response when the sample was asked about the problem related to customers' reactions with dealing with women managers. Slightly more than half of the sample said there was 'no problem'. For the rest, answers ranged from 'major' to 'minor'. When questioned whether they thought it important to consider the feelings of people who might feel uncomfortable when confronted by a woman, the majority said that it was important and that they would consider gender, at least to some extent,

for specific positions. It must be mentioned here that the specific jobs respondents were referring to were highly technical in nature, i.e., sales engineer, production planners, architects, and those dealing with clients from countries in which it was uncommon for women to play a role in business. The general idea of respondents was that instead of compromising women managers' credibility and job satisfaction, it was better to place them in positions where they would be most effective and have the best opportunities to demonstrate their abilities while at the same time, reaching organizational objectives.

To the final statement related to there not being enough suitable management positions for women, slightly more than half of respondents were inclined to believe that plenty of opportunities existed but there were not enough women who wanted to take these up. On the other hand, for almost a quarter of the sample who saw a lack of suitable management positions for women as a 'major' problem, the view was expressed that despite women gaining higher education and training, their proportional increase in management, at middle and senior levels, is still challenging. Three female line managers cited cases of male and female friends who had graduated from the same MBA batch, and had entered specific organizations at the same time, but while male careers advanced, women's did not. They recounted examples of 'showcase' jobs, i.e., women given grand job titles but without the accompanying authority. Women also were given more 'acting' titles as compared to men in management. The fact that women are not progressing at similar levels to men is obvious from the remarks of a senior female line manager, 'If I were born a man, I would have reached my present position faster and would have probably gone much higher'.



## ORGANIZATIONAL PROCESSES PERSPECTIVE

**Training:** None of the respondents indicated that their firms had special training only for women. In public sector enterprises, both sexes participated in all training courses at the same rate, however males dominated most management development programs in private firms. In almost all cases, for out of town/country training, the proportion of men participating exceeded that of women.

From findings reported in the previous chapter, women managers perceive a higher need than men for management training and were dissatisfied with the amount of training they actually received. Despite most firms introducing a variety of formal training programs in recent years, managers indicated that on-the-job training still remained the most essential type for managers. In terms of OJT, men and women were treated equally if they were assigned the same jobs. But men appeared to be given more forward-looking training, in that it was common practice for firms to transfer male managers every 2-3 years to a new area, as part of the grooming process for upper management positions.

In-house (corporate-based-based training), educational institution-based training and contracting out were other popular forms of managerial training offered. Overall, the highest number of training programs were offered by MNCs to their managers and the lowest number was that offered by Thai-owned firms. For example, whilst managers of both sexes had received an average of 3-4 sessions of training ranging from 5 days - 2 weeks in MNCs, managers in private firms reported only 1-2 sessions, for a shorter

length of time. Government enterprises offered managers of both sexes equal opportunities to study for a degree or diploma in management/administration under sponsorship. Interestingly, HR managers reported that a greater proportion of older women managers in both sectors, showed interest and were enrolled in twilight college programs, than were men.

When questioned about the courses/topics offered by the firm as training, it was revealed that whilst there were quite a number of courses in the different specializations, there were few on personal development, career planning, time management and networking. Male managers, on the whole, attended more seminars/conferences in areas such as strategic planning, budgeting/forecasting, and management by objectives, all of which were geared towards a broader, general management base, which prepared them better to move up the management ladder.

There was a difference of opinion between male and female respondents when asked whether their firms saw the importance of providing specialized, all-woman management courses. Women respondents agreed that they were functioning in a culture that poses difficulties that their male counterparts did not have to deal with and hence have special training needs that can raise their consciousness in overcoming the many personal and institutional barriers they face. The majority of male respondents believed that specialized training for women was not only patronizing but also perpetuated the myth that women are deficient. They strongly felt that women were perfectly capable of competing with men in the 'normal' training programs.



**Assessment Of Managers in terms of Performance**

Women can have near or equal status with men for managerial jobs only if their performance is perceived to be equal or superior to men. Respondents were handed a list of performance criteria and asked to assess male and female managers, based on these. The conclusions of these findings could in fact, reflect actual company practice in the hiring/promotion of women. The percentage distribution of responses comparing work performances is reflected in Table 8.4

**Table 8.4**  
**Work Performance of Male and Female Managers**

<b>Performance Indicators</b>	<b>Men Better</b>	<b>Women Better</b>	<b>No Difference</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
Efficiency/Productivity	24	12	56	8
Creativity	48	32	16	4
Motivation to Work	20	40	36	4
Reliability	16	12	64	8
Supervisory skills	44	32	20	4
Teamwork	20	16	60	4
Attention to Detail	12	68	20	-
Decisiveness	44	24	20	12

For six out of eight of the performance indicators, men are believed to be better than women, although more than half the sample believe no differences in performance exists in the case of efficiency, reliability and team work. However, the greatest apparent disparity between the sexes arises from the respondents' belief of women's greater attention to detail and their motivation to work. It is interesting to note that 'creativity' 'reliability' and 'decisiveness', all key characteristics which are considered for upper management are perceived more in men than in women, whilst a factor such

as 'attention to detail' which is not normally identified for upper management is seen as being a feminine attribute.

The question arises as to whether these rankings are based on objective assessment and measurement conducted by the sample or whether they simply reflect reigning myths about Thai female managers. As a determinant of recruitment practices, however, what is important is that many key decision makers believe women to be inferior to men, according to this criteria, and act accordingly. If Thai women really do not possess the characteristics essential for management, then the rationale for their exclusion appears sound. However, if stereotypes influence decision makers in their hiring/promotion decisions, then they are discriminating against individual women who do not conform to the average of their sex.

## **Promotion**

In terms of promotion, few changes had been made in favour of women. Public sector enterprises still continue to heavily rely on seniority as the underlying factor for promotion, which immediately places women at a disadvantage because of their younger ages. That women are not promoted at the same rate as men is evidenced from the findings in Chapter VII, in which less than 5 per cent of women managers when asked, : 'if you could continue to work for your present firm, what is the highest level to which you will be promoted?', responded that they hoped for a position in senior management. Similarly, as reported in chapter VI, when asked 'how do you anticipate your career will develop within the next 3-5 years?', only 43 per cent of



women managers against 56 per cent of males, appeared optimistic on their prospects for promotion within their own firms.

There is also evidence to demonstrate that women may be denied promotion into or within management ranks not so much by organizational context factors, i.e., industry type or customer preference, but also because top management's commonly held views that men, not women should be in policy-making meetings with them. A line manager in a private firm, commented on this :

Women are promoted to supervisory and mid-management positions in my company. Yet they are without much authority as the firm is still managed as a family-type business, most decisions being made by male members of the family. I can't see any future for these women because the President is not keen on having them at board level. (Respondent # 20).

## **COMMENTS FROM HR/LINE MANAGERS ON THE GLASS CEILING**

Surprisingly, less than a quarter of the sample had heard of the term 'glass ceiling'. Consequently the term was interpreted in Thai. Judging from the disparity between the large number of women in entry-level and mid-management positions and the very few that rose to the top, several of the younger managers, of both sexes, accepted that a glass ceiling existed and that it was both an individual and organizational issue. It was mainly older line managers, mostly male, who rejected the idea of a glass ceiling and who believed that 'if women are not going upwards it's a social problem, not an organizational one'. The small number in senior management was explained away as the low level of interest in the job, expressed by women themselves. Several managers in this group explained that Thailand, as a society, exhibits a higher level of structural

discrimination, i.e., the sharper sex role differentiation in society at large, but that there was a lower level of work-specific discrimination, indeed often lower than in the home environment. Pointing to the relatively higher number of women managers and entrepreneurs in Thailand, they argued that if a glass ceiling existed, it was lower than those found in organizations in other Asian countries (neighbouring Islamic countries were given as examples) and that, despite the lack of a legal framework for equal opportunities, Thai women managers, were not in a worse position than their counterparts in many Western countries.

## **SUMMARY**

The data from the interviews reveals that women still face a number of constraints in filling management positions. For example, the responses of many of the managers in the sample, make it clear that organizational cultures in Thailand are still gender-biased. Despite the advent of women into the workforce and into management, the male management culture is the 'only' model that exists and which women are judged by. In fact, the qualities of deference, collaboration and co-operation, which are prioritized in Thai women's socialization are linked with subordinate rather than with leadership roles. A consequence of this is that women managers are often ignored or their abilities underestimated by their male colleagues, who are largely unaccustomed to perceiving women as managers or to realize that there may be different experiences in managing according to gender. Although there are no policies that overtly discriminate against women, there is evidence that employer's attitudes do seem to exclude them. Employment advertisements frequently specify gender. In quite a few



cases, the responses of male and female managers in the sample were identical in expressing stereotypical beliefs, indicating that women managers were not necessarily supportive of increased opportunity for other women.

The findings of the interviews with women managers (Chapter VII) suggested that organizational structures and practices may account for ways in which women are discriminated against in management. Several of the women had struggled with managing gender relations at work, had related instances of inequality arising from systemic discrimination and had shown how patriarchal conditions had defined their behaviour, actions and images. That culturally influenced patterns of male 'superiority' and female 'inferiority' is likely to affect the managerial decisions regarding hiring and promotion of women, is already evidenced in several instances in this chapter.

## **CHAPTER IX**

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In this chapter, a summary of the major findings of the study are presented under the three themes used throughout the study, i.e., the representation of Thai women in management, their work-family interface, and the barriers (gender, organization structure and processes) encountered by them in their upward mobility. As mentioned in the introduction of this study, there are two reasons for doing this. First, to provide a framework that will help women managers to understand their own careers and how they interrelate with other aspects of their lives; and second, to help identify policies that might be beneficial to women in achieving their potential. Certain conclusions are offered in light of the research questions posed in the study and the chapter ends with topics/themes that could be pursued in further research on Thai women managers.

#### **THE REPRESENTATION OF THAI WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT**

It is evident from the data that the average Thai female manager is aged between 30-35 years, is more likely to be married, and hold a postgraduate qualification. She has worked without interruptions throughout her career, is likely to have a background in marketing or finance, and has been promoted to her present position from inside her current firm. There are several differences between female middle managers in the public and private sectors. Public sector managers are older, slightly less educated, and more likely to have a first degree in Arts, as against women managers in private firms who hold first degrees in either business management or economics, and who are more likely to have a postgraduate qualification from a foreign university. Female managers



in multinationals are the youngest and the most highly educated of all female managers. They hold an MBA qualification, most often from abroad, and are more likely to be single.

It was mentioned in the literature that the areas in which women are most commonly accepted are actually 'extensions' of the traditional roles that women assume in the family. In Thailand, finance is also an aspect of women's domestic role and this is reflected in the management functions in which they can be found. In the West these are primarily caring roles. This pattern is more evident among public sector women managers, who are concentrated in administration, personnel and accounting. The occupational specializations of Thai women managers in private firms also reflect their educational choices and appear different than their counterparts in the West. They are more likely to be found in marketing, finance and general management.

Based on evidence from the study, there are few socio-demographic differences between Thai male and female managers. However, judging from the biographical data on women managers it can be concluded that the single most important key to women's upward mobility is education. Furthermore, there appears to be a link between Western education, field of study, and higher earnings. The majority of women earning the highest salaries appeared to be those who were also most satisfied with their jobs and the study found that almost all such women had had a postgraduate qualification in business from a university abroad. Perhaps it is the combination of better language skills and increased self-confidence (that comes with Western education in business) that renders some Thai women more competitive than others.

Education becomes more important for Thai women managers than men because of two reasons. First, because of the ascriptive nature of Thai society, men are offered more alternative routes, i.e., through informal selection, to management. Second, men are offered more training at entry-level which ensures their upward progression. The fact that education is *the* key to progress in Thailand is not at all surprising. The Western women in management literature also shows that of all variables, education is the major route whereby women reach managerial level positions.

The findings show several similarities in terms of work aspirations among Thai male and female managers. But from the group of women interviewed it was evident that what they had in common in terms of management was not conditional on their gender. They shared needs for achievement, energy, courage, and an ability to stick to what they believed in. They all had worked very hard to get what they wanted. In these attributes, they do not appear to be at all different from their male counterparts. In fact, it was evident from the questionnaire responses that women had higher levels of commitment to their careers, staff and organizations than men.

The possibility that women are under-represented in senior management as a result of their own attitudes and choices (Siengthai et al, 1994) is not supported by the evidence in this study. It is clear that women managers had a positive attitude towards their careers and showed high levels of motivation in furthering them. More significantly, three-quarters of the sample wanted to move to higher levels of management.



Another factor evident from the interviews with women was their definition of success. Success was seen in terms of the extent to which the women felt their potential was used. The primary career goal in most instances was self-fulfilment and their main motivation derived from doing work which they enjoyed and offered them opportunities for self-development. This is evident from the fact that a number of women had discounted promotions where they felt that taking them would not give intrinsic satisfaction. The career orientation of Thai women therefore, strikes at the heart of stereotyped attitudes which suggest that women's career motivation is less than Thai men's (Siengthai et al, 1994). These findings broadly reflect Western research on women in management. For example, White et al's (1992) study of British women managers, cited in the earlier literature, found that women were motivated by the intrinsic desire to excel at their work and their demand for challenging and interesting work was stronger than their desire for promotion.

Despite the many commonalties evident among Thai women managers, a distinction must be drawn on the basis of age. The new generation of women managers differs in several important respects from the previous one, and these differences reflect emerging trends among educated urban Thai women. From their responses in interviews, it was clear that younger women are changing the relative importance given to family and work in their lives. They were delaying marriage, having fewer children, and planning their families in a more calculated manner. This pattern was most evident among young women managers employed in MNCs. Even their attitude towards their careers was different. Younger women managers were more interested in career planning, had different perceptions about situations and organizations, and had a clear

vision of wanting to move up the hierarchy. On the whole therefore, they were more overtly, personally ambitious women. Older women appeared to be more accepting of women's gendered role in Thai society, the family, and work organizations. This does not necessarily mean they agreed with the terms and conditions that women actually experience, it is just that their statements denoted a higher level of tolerance and conformity with the dominant male culture. This generational gap has two implications. First, it is difficult to arrive at a simplified, unitary profile of the Thai woman manager; and second, younger graduate women in the early stages of managerial employment are likely to experience careers which are quite different from those women a generation above them. It also suggests that a thorough understanding of the behaviour of women managers at work involves not just a description of their similarities and differences from men, but also an appreciation of the distinctive behaviour associated with other relevant individual differences that exists between women themselves.

It was not just between women that the differences in age affected motivation and attitudes. There were also differences in attitudes towards women between younger and older male managers, with younger men displaying a greater tendency to be supportive of, and promote women who are their organizational subordinates. Their approach may be more supportive because of their greater personal experiences with some of the problems women have to face in organizations. Besides younger men are more likely to have attended co-educational schools and universities, and to have as their peers, women who like them, are working their way up the organization. They are also more likely to be married to women who are dedicated to their careers and who must cope with the challenge of balancing the demands of home with work.



## WORK VERSUS FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

Although Thai women attempt to pursue a working life that is close to that of the typical male, with continuous full-time employment, it is only a tiny number of women who manage to shake off gender differences in the household. As evidenced in the study, women managers spent almost nine hours per week more than men on household tasks and childcare. Despite full-time household assistance, several women identified conflict between promotion and childcare responsibilities. More than half of the sample of married women managers, admitted to receiving almost no assistance from their husbands. Neither did they consider it their right to demand such assistance. The persistence of traditional cultural values which emphasize the importance of women's familial role is often pursued as an explanation for the lack of equality consciousness among Thai women. In not expecting participation from their spouses, Thai women appear to be not only accommodating their husbands' domestic laziness but actually supporting it. Hence, the fact that some women in the sample sought to explain their husband's persistent lack of participation in housework with statements such as, 'being Chinese, he has never learned to do housework!' comes as no surprise in this study.

It becomes clear from the findings that the tensions associated with women's 'double-shift' cannot be overcome simply by hiring domestic help since this does not resolve the problem of having time to accommodate all the 'demands' made on them. These demands as women managers saw them included arranging social and entertainment activities, supervising their children's homework, hiring and supervising paid help, as

well as the organization of the family's food supplies. It is likely that the dilemmas and struggles faced by Thai women managers will always be part of their lives, as long as society creates contradictions in affirming a woman's primary role as wife and mother, whilst the economy needs her in other capacities. The study brings to the surface the fact that success for a Thai woman is not wholly dependent on individual effort. Because of the many demands made on her, she is never the source of her own overall success or failure. In fact the successful married woman manager in the study often had three supporting figures to help her cope; primarily a male mentor to help her in her career, a mother or maid at home to look after house and children, and a husband to support her.

## **BARRIERS TO PROGRESSION**

Whatever their sector and industry, glass ceilings for women managers were very much in place. Discrimination was evidenced in several forms, some covert, some explicit. With very few exceptions, the women interviewed had, in different ways, confronted obstacles to her progress.

**Gender-centred barriers:** Overall, the findings show strong support that the 'Think Manager - Think Male' is also a phenomenon very strong in Thai management. In this aspect, sex-typing is similar to that found in the western studies made in the US, UK, and Germany and in Asian countries such as Japan and China (Schein et al, 1996). Despite the historical precedent that Thai women have always been more active in commercial activities than men, and still handle money management in families, the



view that there is little similarity between 'manager' and 'woman' is still widely held. It is precisely this kind of thinking that put a Thai woman's identity at risk. At work, she is blamed for 'woman-like' behaviour, yet in society, few people would value her professional competence; she is still expected to behave as a woman. Nevertheless, most women managers in the study said they wanted to retain their femininity, an outcome also desired by many men. It is doubtful if the male and female managers here were talking of the same femininity. My observation is that whilst men were thinking about the narrow traditional female role, the women were looking at their femininity as a feature that encompassed both their social role in the family and their professional competence.

**Organizational structure barriers:** The accounts of woman managers' experiences and views in the study are expressions of tensions caused by working in systems dominated by male values. If one considers age, education, and experience, as the three factors expected to lead to a rise in one's organizational status, each had a much greater impact on the progress of male rather than female managers. The findings also showed an unequitable distribution of authority, with males more likely to have authority reflected in broader spans of management and in greater number of decision-making arenas.

Kanter's argument, cited in the earlier literature, is that behaviour which may be assumed to be characteristic of a person as a member of a particular social group is often an appropriate reaction to their social and organizational situation. The processes of visibility, contrast and assimilation which Kanter describes as affecting members of

marginalized social groups were experienced by some Thai women managers despite their being in managerial positions for almost two decades!

In order for their activities to be noticed, women have to attract the attention of significant others. But in the Thai cultural context, such visibility might cause problems for a woman manager for two reasons. First, she might be seen as flaunting herself which might reflect badly on her reputation; second, in a Buddhist-orientated, collective culture, visibility might be perceived as being self-centred (aiming to improve one's lot without caring for the general good). Hence it comes as no surprise to find in the study that women managers who are in a minority in some organizations, did not know how to proceed or what to say in various circumstances, a situation made worse because unlike male managers, they did not have a reference group whose direct example or advice was available. This left women trying to develop their own strategies in doubt as to how their male bosses were going to respond; it also led women to imitate their male counterparts management style, thinking and behaviour.

Kanter also argued that women can set their own terms only when they form a 'critical mass' of at least 30 - 35 per cent of the organization. It would appear logical that the critical mass, as Kanter termed it, would have to be located in positions of power to become a force for change. But the present mass of Thai women is by and large at the bottom and middle of most organization hierarchies. Until there is a critical mass of women in key leverage positions in organizations in Thailand, it is futile to expect them to have the ability to make any substantial changes in women's positions and status.



**Organization processes barriers:** Companies' HR policies for women constitute an integral part of the employment and labour market systems. As mentioned earlier, the study showed few background differences between Thai male and female managers in terms of their qualifications and experiences. However, this is not reflected in what appears to be happening in the selection and promotion of women managers. Employers' views about the unsuitability of women for many types of jobs (as evidenced from their remarks during interviews) are clearly restricting Thai women's employment opportunities.

The predominance of men at the top of the hierarchy in most firms also implies that the negative attitudes which impede the progress of women remain unchallenged. In the survey of HR/Line managers undertaken in the study, there was evidence of not only attitudes which were overtly sexist (we can't have a woman because the President wants a man) but also those reflecting unthinking acceptance of tradition (women should behave according to our cultural tradition, have a sense of propriety). These preconceived notions were responsible for discrimination in recruiting, selection and promotion. What was worse was that HR/Line managers, while acknowledging the prevalence of discriminatory practices, rationalized them as inevitable, natural and normal in the Thai context. Even when employers did not discriminate intentionally, many of the customary rules and practices which characterize Thai management, operated to the disadvantage of women. The absence of affirmative action legislation left them with practically no legal basis to challenge discriminatory treatment. It can be concluded therefore, that the absence of laws protecting women's employment is

responsible for causing the organization processes barriers to have a far more negative effect on Thai women's progress, in comparison with their Western counterparts.

### **Women's perception of barriers in the public and private sectors**

Women's progress is a consequence of not just their individual dynamism and ambition, but also the operation of supportive structures and fair day to day practices. The findings of this study leave little doubt about the nature and extent of discrimination and disadvantages experienced by Thai women working in organizations. Nevertheless, the extent to which a particular barrier was experienced, varied according to background, sector and industry. Whilst more women in the private sector had experienced obstacles related to their gender, barriers related to organizational structure were more evident among women in the public sector. Those who were employed in occupations which had a higher proportion of women such as finance, had on the whole, encountered fewer barriers than those in male-dominated occupations such as production or operations management. Overall, it was older women managers in traditional occupations such as administration, in the public sector, who appeared more dissatisfied with their progress and quality of corporate life than their younger counterparts in private firms. The fact that women managers in the public sector had to wait much longer to achieve the same positions as their male colleagues, also the fact that their rewards and progression did not rely solely on their performance and ability, resulted in low realizations of expectations for these management women than their counterparts elsewhere. To say that the public sector has been more sympathetic to women managers and can be held by as an example of a



'model employer' where equality issues are concerned, would be incorrect in the Thai context.

It appears that women managers in Thai-owned private firms suffered most from barriers arising from organizational processes. It is not just the fact that many of the smaller firms had no clearly-defined HR function, there was evidence that even among the larger Thai-owned firms, the procedures for selection and promotion were superficially followed and many managers based their decisions on informal and subjective criteria. By and large, the study found that women employed by MNCs had the most positive view of their experiences. No doubt they had confronted instances of gendered differentiation and sexist practices and attitudes, but these were, for the most part, fewer than women employed in the public sector and Thai-owned private firms. The fact that many of the HR practices in MNCs are based primarily on objective criteria and therefore, discriminate less in recruiting and promoting women employees (Cheng et al, 1994), could help provide an explanation for this phenomenon. On the basis of these findings therefore, it can be concluded that the ownership of organizations could have meaningful implications for the participation and promotion of Thai women.

### **How Thai women managers differ from their Western counterparts**

Many of the problems women managers in Thailand face are similar to those encountered by women managers in the West. But there are a few differences and these have their roots in the Thai cultural framework. The results of the study suggest

that women were more concerned about fighting the barriers they encounter in doing their current jobs effectively, rather than dealing with those that hampered their progress up the hierarchy. This is not to say that they were less ambitious or unconcerned about their career progress. It was just that they were operating in a more restrictive framework wherein there were few laws to protect their employment and one in which the appropriate patterns of behaviour for women were more restrictive than in Western countries. Unlike their Western counterparts who were making continuous attempts to shatter the glass ceiling and move on, there were few indications that Thai women were overtly challenging men, or demanding to be valued on new and different terms. Reluctance to engage in a struggle to break the glass ceiling for Thai women, seems to be coupled with a desire for a balanced life which included family and self. For instance, some of them believed that if they pushed too hard on the workfront, divorce would result, and this strengthened their tendency to value the stability of their family relationships more than they valued the opportunity to rise in the company.

Two other differences emerge from the Thai sample and their Western counterparts. In the West, women frequently express concern about the quality and cost of childcare and are actively seeking workplace nurseries managed by the state or by individual organizations. In contrast, because many Thai women rejected the idea of childcare facilities outside the home, it would not make much sense for organizations to provide women with such facilities. Moreover, there was no recommendation for job-sharing or the need to develop part-time work positions made by the women.



Second, it is interesting to note that none of the women suggested affirmative action as a possible remedy to employment inequality. Instead Thai women managers strongly felt that men needed to become more sensitive to issues that women encounter. Western women might not be as willing to suggest that a remedy for women is dependent upon making men more sensitive to the issues women face, even though such a remedy might hopefully result in increased sensitivity on the part of men. This implicit dependency on men to address issues related to women is somewhat surprising but reflective of a strongly male-orientated Thai culture.

What most Thai women managers wanted from their organizations was special leave to cover emergencies and flexible hours for both themselves and their husbands. Except for the public sector, where taking special leave to care for sick dependents did not pose a problem, such leave was often not sanctioned or allowed only grudgingly in private firms, and women often took their annual leave to care for sick children. One of the problems frequently mentioned in the survey responses by both male and female managers was that there was inflexibility in hours of work, not enough flexitime, and core hours did not allow the collection of children from schools. Bangkok's horrendous traffic jams made getting from one point to another much worse. From the remarks made by male managers it appears that many wanted to work less and participate more in family life. In fact, lack of time for family commitments was highlighted by more men than women. Hence it is possible that structural solutions such as flexitime might help both men and women to create a better balance between their public and domestic spheres of activity.

## **Recommendations for future research**

In order for the Thai women in management literature to develop and grow, much interesting work remains to be done. There are still gaps in the knowledge about the aspirations, consciousness and experiences of women managers in different functions and at different management levels. A survey of women in different functions at the early stages of their careers could be useful in order to study how these aspirations and experiences equip them for future promotions. We know from this study that there is a difference between the attitudes and motivations of older male and female Thai managers and their younger counterparts. It would also be interesting to look at the careers of these younger women managers longitudinally to see what changes occur in their characteristics/leadership style as they move up the corporate ladder. For example, do they display the same characteristics/leadership style as they did as middle managers, or do they become more androgynous to fit in with the expectations of their predominantly male environment at higher levels?

The whole notion of career development for Thai women needs major investigation. A study of career development strategies of successful women, of the kind done in the UK and US would be useful. It would be also be useful to identify the kinds of organizations, the climate, and the management styles that allow women in various job classifications to succeed. For instance, one of the important outcomes of the research was the reported lack of clearly defined promotion criteria in many organizations. Further research could establish whether women are better represented in companies using clearly defined promotion criteria.



In addition to the above, many more issues can be focused on which add to the knowledge and practical experience of Thai managers. It is important that managers, especially males, learn to recognize the valuable resource that women managers represent in management and administrative positions. It is hoped that the partial answers supplied by this study will generate and spawn additional research to permit a deeper understanding of the apparent prejudice against women in management, and provide the means whereby such prejudice can be minimized or eliminated for future generations.

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## **APPENDIX**



## **COVER LETTER FOR SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE**

Date.....'95.

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am conducting doctoral research at the Warwick Business School, University of Warwick, UK, on the topic of **'Women Managers in Thailand: Cultural, Organizational and Domestic Issues'**. I sincerely appreciate the help of persons like yourself in exploring this topic. Through the use of the attached questionnaire, I am attempting to explore important differences in the personal and work lives of male and female managers, employed in public and private sector firms in Thailand. It is only with an effective data base on Thai managers, that firms can hope to make the best use of available managerial resources - resources that contribute significantly to future continuity and success.

This questionnaire is being distributed to an equal number of male and female managers, holding middle-level management positions in various public and private firms organizations in Bangkok. I realize that your schedule must be very hectic, hence I would greatly appreciate your response to this questionnaire. Would you please fill in the details and mail it in the self-addressed envelope provided, within the next two weeks?

Your data will be treated in the strictest confidence and will be used only as part of my doctoral research. Should you have any queries about the questionnaire, my address and telephone number are given below.

Your time, effort and cooperation is highly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Patricia Arttachariya

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## **QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MALE AND FEMALE MANAGERS**

### **Section 1: Biographical Data:**

1. Age.....years
2. Are you ? Male ☐ Female ☐
3. Marital Status: Single ☐ Married ☐ Divorced ☐ Widowed ☐
4. How many children do you have?.....
5. Is your youngest child? Too young to be at school ☐ At School ☐  
At University ☐ At Work ☐
6. What is your religion? Buddhist ☐ Christian ☐ Muslim ☐  
Others..... (please specify)
7. What is your ethnic background? Thai ☐ Thai-Chinese ☐ Chinese ☐  
Thai-Muslim ☐ Others..... (please specify)
8. What is your highest academic qualification? High School ☐ Bachelors ☐  
Masters ☐ Doctorate ☐ Others.....(please specify)
9. At which type of institution did you obtain your highest qualification?  
In a Thai university ☐ In a foreign university ☐ (Country.....)
10. Which field of study did you obtain your first degree in? Arts ☐ Science ☐  
Engineering/Technology ☐ Business ☐ Others.....(please specify)
11. Do you hold an MBA? Yes ☐ No ☐ Am currently enrolled ☐

### **Section II : Family Background/Upbringing**

1. Of what ethnic origin was your father? Thai ☐ Thai-Chinese ☐ Chinese ☐  
Thai-Muslim ☐ Others ..... (please specify).
2. What was your father's educational level ? Secondary School ☐ High School ☐  
Bachelors ☐ Postgraduate level ☐ Others.....(please specify)
3. At the height of his working career, into what category would your father's occupation have fallen?  
  
☐ Professional/Senior Managers (in a public/private organization)  
☐ Middle/Junior Manager (in a public/private organization)  
☐ Skilled worker (i.e. electrician)  
☐ Semi-skilled worker (i.e. machine operator)



- ☐ Unskilled worker (i.e. laborer or farm worker)  
☐ Self-Employed.
4. What was your mother's education level? Secondary School ☐ High School ☐  
 Bachelors ☐ Postgraduate level ☐ Others.....(please specify).
5. What was your mother's occupation?
- ☐ Businesswoman (own/family firm)  
☐ Manager (public/private organization)  
☐ Employee (public/private organization)  
☐ Unskilled worker (in a firm/farm)  
☐ Housewife
6. How many brothers and sisters were there in your family?  
 Brothers ..... Sisters.....  
 What rank in the family were you? Oldest ☐ Middle ☐ Youngest ☐
7. What were your main hobbies/interests as a child?.....
8. Were you given any household assignments while young? No ☐ Yes ☐  
☐ Looking after younger sibling  
☐ Assisting parents in their business  
☐ Looking after household expenses  
☐ Housework  
 Others.....(please specify)
9. Your father's contribution/influence on the selection of your career was  
 Low ☐ Moderate ☐ High ☐ Very High ☐ None at all ☐
10. Your mother's contribution/influence on the selection of your career was  
 Low ☐ Moderate ☐ High ☐ Very High ☐ None at all ☐
- (If single, please go to Section III)
11. Your husband/wife is: Employed full-time ☐ Employed Part-time ☐  
 Not Employed at all ☐
12. Do you earn more or less than your spouse? More ☐ Same ☐ Less ☐  
 Don't Know ☐
13. Your husband/wife's career can be described as ?  
☐ Businessman/woman (entrepreneur)  
☐ Manager (public/private organization)  
☐ Employee (public/private organization)  
☐ Unskilled worker (firm, farm)  
 Others..... (please specify)

14. His/her educational level is? High School ☐ Bachelors ☐ Postgraduate ☐  
Others..... (please specify)

**Section III Present Job:**

1. What is the name of your present organization ? .....
2. How long have you been with this organization?.....years/months
3. What is your present job title?.....
4. How long have you been in your present position ?.....years/months
5. What is your management function? (please tick one box)  
  
☐ Administration    ☐ Computing    ☐ Finance/accounting    ☐ Personnel/HR.  
☐ Marketing/Sales    ☐ Education/Training    ☐ Purchasing    ☐ PR  
☐ General Management    ☐ Production/Operations  
Others..... (please specify)
6. How many people are you directly responsible for?  
Men..... Women..... Total number.....
7. As part of your job do you have the authority to make the **final** decision regarding the following? (tick yes or no)  
  
  - setting goals for your department/division                      Yes☐ No☐
  - hiring subordinates for your department/division              Yes☐ No☐
  - promoting subordinates in your department/division          Yes☐ No☐
  - firing subordinates in your department/division                Yes☐ No☐
  - deciding the size of department/division's budget            Yes☐ No☐
  - deciding how department/division budget is spent            Yes☐ No☐
- 8 . Overall, in an average week, how many hours do you work (this includes entertaining clients, etc.)  
  
☐ 30    ☐ 40    ☐ 50    ☐ 60    Over 60.....
9. What is your present level of total gross annual remuneration?  
  
☐ Baht 250,000 - 300,000                      ☐ Baht301,000 - 350,000  
☐ Baht 351,000 - 400,000                      ☐ Baht 401,000 - 450,000  
Over baht 500,000..... (please specify)
10. Is your salary the principal or secondary income in your household?  
Principal ☐                      Secondary ☐



11. Have you ever taken a career break? No ☐ Yes ☐  
☐ for childcare ☐ for eldercare ☐ for training ☐ for monkhood  
Others..... (please specify)

12. If yes, for how long were you on the break?  
Under 3 months ☐ 6 months - 1 year ☐ 1 - 2 years ☐ Over 2 years ☐

#### **Section IV Career Progression and Barriers:**

1. For how many employers have you worked so far? .....
2. At what age was your first managerial appointment? .....(please write your age)
3. What was the formal process by which you were recruited to your present position?  
☐ Answered advertisement ☐ Internal Promotion ☐ Through an executive search firm ☐ Unsolicited application. Others.....(please specify)
4. Were there informal approaches besides? Yes ☐ No ☐
5. How do you anticipate that your career will progress in the next 3-5 years? (please tick one box only)  
☐ I will be promoted within my current organization  
☐ I will be promoted within another organization  
☐ I will quit this organization to start up my own business  
☐ I will stay in my present position/move sideways  
☐ I will retire/take time out for domestic reasons  
☐ I will change my career entirely  
Others .....(please specify)
6. Has your employer ever financed a training course that you have proposed for your own self-development? Yes ☐ No ☐
7. Which of the following are principal barriers that you have encountered in your career? (please rank the three most important, i.e. 1 = most important, etc.)  
☐ No Barriers ☐ Family Commitments ☐ Lack of adequate childcare  
☐ Insufficient Education ☐ Inadequate facilities ☐ Lack of training provisions  
☐ Lack of career guidance ☐ Inadequate encouragement from top management  
☐ Lack of motivation/self-confidence ☐ Prejudice of colleagues  
☐ Social Pressures (from friends, family, etc.) ☐ Senior management seen as a 'club'. Others.....(please specify)
8. Which of the following have given you the most positive support in your career? (please tick up to the two most important)  
☐ Parents ☐ Spouse ☐ Colleagues ☐ Male Boss ☐ Female Boss  
☐ Male networks ☐ Female Networks. Others.....(please specify)

9. Which of the following factors motivates you in your work (please tick the appropriate blank)

	Very Important	Fairly Important	Not very Important	Not at all Important
Financial Reward	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Status Promotion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sense of Achievement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fear of Failure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enjoying the Job	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Respect from Others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enjoying the Sense of Responsibility	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Meeting Targets/ Deadlines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Lots of Free Time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Others .....(please specify)

10. Do you prefer to work with managers of your own sex?

No ☐ Definitely ☐ Usually ☐ Gender makes no difference ☐

11. Do you prefer to work for managers of your own sex?

No ☐ Definitely ☐ Usually ☐ Gender makes no difference ☐.

12. Do you prefer male or female subordinates?

Male ☐ Female ☐ Gender makes no difference ☐



### **Section V: Women in the Organization:**

1. How would you rate your firm overall as a place for women to work?  
Excellent ☐      Pretty Good ☐      Fair ☐      Poor ☐      Not Sure ☐
2. In your firm today, would you say that women have the same chance as equally qualified men to be promoted to senior management?  
Same chance ☐      Not the same chance ☐      Not Sure ☐
3. If women were promoted to senior management in your firm, do you think they will be paid a :  
Higher salary ☐      Lower salary ☐      Paid the same as a senior management man ☐  
Not Sure ☐
4. If your company had to choose between two equally qualified candidates for a promotion, a man or a woman, who do you think will get the job?  
Man ☐      Woman ☐      Not Sure ☐
5. Do you agree/disagree with the following strategies?

	Agree	Disagree
• Women managers should not openly compete with men but do a good job and expect equal remuneration and promotion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Women should build up networks with other women to help each other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Women should demand that the firm have specific policies for hiring/promoting women	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Women should take legal action including filing lawsuits when they see evidence of discrimination	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### **Section VI: Organization of Household Activities:**

1. What sort of help do you have in the household?  
Full-time paid help ☐      Part-time paid help ☐      Relatives who live-in and help on a daily basis ☐      Occasional help from family members/relatives ☐  
Others.....(please specify)
2. Which of the following do you use paid help for?  
Childcare ☐      Cleaning ☐      Cooking ☐      Laundry ☐      Others.....(pl. specify)
3. In a normal week, how many hours do you and your spouse (if married) spend doing the following household activities?

Activity	You (hours)	Your Spouse (Hours)
• Cooking	_____	_____
• Childcare * including driving children to school	_____	_____
• Laundry	_____	_____
• Grocery Shopping	_____	_____
• Cleaning	_____	_____
• House/Car Maintenance	_____	_____

4. What are your leisure activities and how many hours do you spend on these per week?

Leisure Activity	Hours per week
• Watching Television	_____
• Gardening	_____
• Going out with Friends	_____
• Jogging/Exercising	_____
• Reading	_____
• Others.....(please specify)	

5. Have you experienced conflicts between work and family responsibilities?  
 Yes, often ☐                      No, never ☐                      Yes, sometimes☐

6. Please provide specific example(s) of situations under which conflicts occur and how do you normally resolve them?

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Thank you for your cooperation in answering this questionnaire.



## **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR WOMEN MANAGERS**

### **Section I: Childhood/Family Background:**

1. How many brothers and sisters do you have that are a) older than you, b) younger than you, c) your twin?
2. Did your parents hold firm views on most matters? How much freedom did they allow you in terms of choosing subjects at school, your friends, social activities?
3. What values did you learn from your father? Your mother?
4. Did your family want you to have a certain type of job? Or to follow your father/mother?

### **Section II: Educational Background:**

1. Could you tell me something about your schooling. Who influenced you in terms of the subjects you chose? Where did you obtain your M6 (high school) from?
2. When you left school, what college/university did you go to? What subjects did you take up for your first degree?
3. Have you higher qualifications than a bachelors degree? Do you have other qualifications besides?
4. Were you actively involved in student societies?

### **Section III: Present Family Life:**

1. Are you married/single?
2. How many children do you have? How old are they?
3. Can you tell me a little about your husband's career? What do your children think about your career?
4. Do you think that a husband's career/earnings should be better than this wife's? Do you think you will encounter problems if your career is better than your husband's?
5. Who makes the major decisions in the family? Why?
6. How much does your husband assist you with household/childcare activities? Are you satisfied with the level of support you get from him?
7. If an emergency arises at home or at school, which partner usually deals with it?
8. Do you have any family-work conflict that you experience due to the demands of a managerial job?

#### **Section IV: Career History:**

1. Beginning with the first full-time position, I would like to go through your employment history with you, chronologically, right up to your current job. For each position, I would like the following information:
  - a. What was the position? How did you get the job?
  - b. What kind of organization was it? Size?
  - c. What sort of activities did you do in this job? What sort of experience did you gain?
  - d. How long were you in this job? Why did you quit?
2. At what stage in your life did you develop a career plan?
3. When did you first become interested in a career in management? Was this your original choice of career or was it made subsequently?
4. Was anyone particularly influential in guiding your choice of career?

#### **Section V: Present Job:**

1. How long have you been in your present position? What is your job title?
2. What factors do you feel have been important to your success in the firm?
3. What types of skills/attributes do you feel are rewarded by management? Have you ever experienced any tension over internal promotion?
4. Do you desire promotion to a higher position? If you continue to work for your present employer what is the highest level to which you think you can be promoted?
5. In your career, have there been people whom you could consider as mentors? Could you tell me about them (job, gender, authority, relation, type of role)?
6. Do you see yourself as a role model for other women? In what way?
7. What has your company done to help you succeed (probe training needs). What more could your company have done?

#### **Section VI: Managerial Activities and Relationships:**

1. Could you describe a typical day at work? In your current position, do you have to travel for work? Attend cocktail receptions, or entertain people as part of your work?
2. What is your preferred management style in dealing with your subordinates? Do you employ the same style in dealing with male and female subordinates? If not, why?
3. What advantages/disadvantages do women have over men as managers?



4. Do you think it is necessary to 'act like a man' in order to be accepted in a management position?

#### **Section VII: Barriers:**

1. Which, if any, barrier(s) have you encountered so far that you've had to overcome?  
(Prompts):
  - Attitudes of Colleagues
  - Obstacles linked to being a woman
  - Informal male networks
  - Unfavourable organization climate
  - Insufficient training
  - Unfair evaluation procedures
  - Others

#### **Section VIII: Men and Women in the Organization:**

1. What does the word 'equality' mean to you? Do you think you have an equal chance with men within your firm? In what aspects are you disadvantaged?
2. What advice would you give a younger woman manager about managing her own career?

**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR HR/LINE MANAGERS**

**Name of the Firm:.....**

**Section I: General Overview of HRM Practices:**

- 1. Can you tell me how managers are selected for positions in your organization? What criteria is used for assessing candidates for these posts? Who makes the final hiring decision? Are those who are responsible for recruiting/selection trained?
- 2. Where do the applicants come from? On average, what percentage of management jobs are filled from within? If certain management jobs are to be filled through external sources, what are these sources?
- 3. Are informal networks used for managerial recruitment?
- 4. (only for MNCs) Are the policies related to staffing of managers specified by HQ or they formulated at branch level? Who makes the final decision in selecting middle managers for the different departments?

**Section II :Women in the Organization:**

- 1. How many women are employed as managers in this firm? How many of these are Supervisors, Mid-level, and Senior Managers?
- 2. Which management functions are filled by women? Why?
- 3. In what areas or functions would you consider women unsuitable for management positions?
- 4. From the HR perspective what would you identify as major hazards/strengths in hiring/promoting women as managers?
- 5. In your opinion how far up the managerial ladder can a woman go?
- 6. How would you assess the genders according to the following performance criteria:

Efficiency/productivity	Supervisory Skills
Creativity	Team work
Motivation to work	Attention to Detail
Reliability	Decisiveness.
- 7. Do you believe women have an equal chance within the company? It is evident from the data that there are proportionately many more men than women in managerial positions. Why do you think this is so?

**Section III: Attitudes towards Women Managers:**

**Now I am going to place before you a number of showcards containing statements that you sometimes hear people make. For each statement, please tell**



me your degree of agreement or disagreement. Also please provide a brief explanation for your answer.

**Showcard #1:** A woman manager would be accepted by male/female superiors only after she has been given unusually difficult challenges in order to prove herself

Strongly Disagree ☐      Disagree ☐      Agree ☐      Strongly Agree ☐☐☐☐

**Showcard # 2:** Overall, women managers are pushy, loud, and aggressive and have annoying and offensive habits.

Strongly Disagree ☐      Disagree ☐      Agree ☐      Strongly Agree ☐

**Showcard # 3:** Women tend to be less competitive and forceful in both their work and in pursuing their careers than men.

Strongly Disagree ☐      Disagree ☐      Agree ☐      Strongly Agree ☐

**Showcard # 4:** In general, women managers are too emotional to make competent decisions in the company.

Strongly Disagree ☐      Disagree ☐      Agree ☐      Strongly Agree ☐

**Showcard # 5 :** Most women are likely to be overly concerned about details, reluctant to delegate and better at routine rather than creative tasks.

Strongly Disagree ☐      Disagree ☐      Agree ☐      Strongly Agree ☐

**Showcard # 6 :** In general, firms are reluctant to hire and promote women into important management positions because they are considered a bad risk.

Strongly Disagree ☐      Disagree ☐      Agree ☐      Strongly Agree ☐

**Showcard # 7:** Women are not accepted as business partners, peers or supervisors in the same way as are men.

Strongly Disagree ☐      Disagree ☐      Agree ☐      Strongly Agree ☐

**Section IV: Problems Anticipated and Actual:**

Do you see the following as major, some, minor or no problem at all related to the promotion of women to managerial positions?

<b>Problem:</b>	<b>Major Problem</b>	<b>Some Problem</b>	<b>Minor Problem</b>	<b>No Problem</b>
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a. Resistance by male

managers.

- b. Opposition from society
- c. Lack of suitably qualified women to fill management positions
- d. Lower productivity or work efficiency in departments run by women.
- e. Poor customer relations where women have to deal with male clients.
- f. Women's dissatisfaction with available job opportunities.

#### **Section V: Training:**

1. Do women have the same opportunities for training as men? Do they make as much use of these opportunities? If not, what are the reasons?
2. What sort of training programs are offered to women in management? (Specific examples). What has been the average number of women in these programs? Is there a 'women-only' training offered by your firm?
3. Is there a glass ceiling impeding women in your company?



**RESPONDENT'S PROFILE (Women Managers)**

<b>Function</b>	<b>Sector</b>	<b>Industry/ Ministry</b>	<b>M.Status</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Children</b>	<b>Experience (years)</b>	<b>R.number</b>
Admin	Public	Transport	Married	Over 55	2	21	1
Admin	Public	Education	Married	50-55	1	18	2
Investment	Private	Finance	Single	25-30		6	3
Personnel	Private	Healthcare	Married	30-35	1	8	4
Marketing	Private	Healthcare	Single	30-35		7.5	5
Personnel	Private	Textiles	Single	35-40		9	6
Marketing	Private	Wholesale	Married	35-40	1	11	7
Marketing	Private	Paper	Single	25-30		6	8
Auditing	Private	Paper	Married	35-40	2	11	9
Admin	Public	Health	Married	40-45	2	20	10
Admin	Public	Health	Single	Over 55		35	11
PR	Private	Hotel	Married	35-40	1	10	12
Acctg	Private	Hotel	Married	35-40	2	16	13
Marketing	Private	Furniture	Married	30-35	2	11	14
Acctg	Private	Banking	Married	30-35	2	8	15
Finance	Private	Banking	Single	25-30		5	16
Acctg	Private	Banking	Married	30-35	2	10	17
Marketing	Private	Housing	Divorced	35-40	1	12	18
Marketing	Private	Skincare	Single	40-45		17	19
Personnel	Private	Chemicals	Married	35-40	2	11	20
Acctg	Private	Hotel	Married	35-40	2	10	21
Engg	Private	Housing	Married	30-35		7	22
Acctg	Private	Consulting	Single	25-30		6	23
Marketing	Private	Television	Married	30-35	1	7	24
Personnel	Private	Food	Married	40-45	3	18	25
Admin	Public	Commun	Married	Over 55	2	33	26
Finance	Private	Investment	Divorced	40-45	2	15	27
Personnel	Private	Finance	Married	35-40	2	13	28
Marketing	Private	Television	Married	35-40	1	17	29
Nursing	Public	Health	Married	50-55	3	28	30
Admin	Private	Television	Married	35-40	1	8	31
Finance	Private	Life Insur	Married	35-40	1	13	32
Marketing	Private	Life Insur	Single	30-35		9	33
Personnel	Private	Life Insur	Married	40-45	2	18	34
Info Tech	Public	Interior	Single	45-50		20	35
Finance	Private	Investment	Married	45-50	2	18	36

Function	Sector	Industry/ Ministry	M.Status	Age	Children	Experience (years)	R.number
Marketing	Private	Skincare	Single	40-45		11	37
Sales	Private	Skincare	Married	35-40	2	9	38
Personnel	Public	Education	Married	Over 55	2	35	39
Acctg	Public	Health	Married	50-55	1	31	40
Acctg	Public	Comm	Married	40-45	2	16	41
Info Tech	Public	Interior	Single	40-45		17	42
Info Tech	Public	Interior	Single	30-35		12	43
R&D	Public	Health	Married	45-50	2	27	44
Personnel	Public	Comm	Single	45-50		19	45
Acctg	Public	Interior	Married	35-40	1	12	46
Acctg	Public	Finance	Single	30-35		11	47
Admin	Public	Finance	Single	35-40		18	48
Acctg	Public	Commerce	Married	35-40	3	15	49
Acctg	Public	Commerce	Single	30-35		11	50
PR	Public	Comm	Single	35-40		14	51
Info Tech	Public	Comm	Married	35-40	2	12	52
Nursing	Public	Health	Single	40-45		20	53
Marketing	Private	Paper	Married	40-45	2	14	54
Research	Public	Commerce	Single	30-35		10	55
Admin	Public	Finance	Married	40-45	2	20	56
Info Tech	Public	Finance	Single	40-45		18	57
Research	Public	Commerce	Married	35-40	2	16	58
Finance	Private	Banking	Married	40-45	2	18	59
Personnel	Public	Comm	Married	45-50	2	21	60
Research	Public	Commerce	Single	35-40		15	61
Admin	Public	Comm	Married	40-45	2	17	62
Acctg	Public	Commerce	Married	35-40	1	13	63
Research	Public	Education	Married	40-45	1	19	64
Marketing	Private	Housing	Married	30-35	2	7	65
Research	Public	Interior	Married	35-40	2	12	66
Personnel	Public	Commerce	Single	40-45		18	67

**Abbreviations:**

Admin	Administration	R & D	Research & Development
PR	Public Relations	Engg	Engineering
Acctg	Accounting	Life Insur	Life Insurance
Info Tech	Information Technology	Comm	Communication



**RESPONDENT'S PROFILE (HRM/LINE) MANAGERS**

<b>Function</b>	<b>Sector</b>	<b>Industry/ Ministry</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Years as Manager</b>	<b>R.Number</b>
Finance	MNC	Banking	43	M	15	1
HR	Public	Civ.Service	49	F	12	2
HR	Thai	Food	53	M	25	3
Mktg	MNC	Pers.Care	50	M	22	4
HR	Public	Education	46	F	10	5
HR	Public	Commerce	45	F	9	6
HR	MNC	Paper	48	F	12	7
HR	Thai	Insurance	39	F	9	8
Finance	Thai	Banking	42	F	11	9
Mktg	MNC	Real Est.	48	M	15	10
Mktg	Thai	Consultants	50	F	22	11
Finance	MNC	Hotel	43	F	14	12
HR	MNC	Hotel	50	M	16	13
HR	MNC	Petroleum	45	F	15	14
HR	MNC	Containers	51	M	23	15
HR	Thai	Investment	42	F	15	16
HR	Thai	Furniture	48	F	20	17
Mktg	MNC	Agriculture	50	M	20	18
HR	Thai	Beverages	45	M	20	19
HR	Thai	Interiors	49	F	16	20
Mktg.	MNC	Chemicals	55	M	32	21
HR	Thai	Textiles	51	F	27	22
HR	Thai	Wholesale	52	M	30	23
Finance	Thai	Food	56	M	31	24
HR	Thai	Education	40	M	8	25

**Abbreviations:**

**HR :** Human Resources  
**MNC :** Multinational Corporation  
**Mktg:** Marketing  
**Real Est:** Real Estate  
**Civ.Service:** Office of the Civil Service Commission  
**Pers.Care:** Personal Care Products

## **LIST OF ORGANIZATIONS PARTICIPATING IN THE STUDY**

### **PUBLIC SECTOR ORGANIZATIONS**

Ministry of Public Health  
Ministry of Interior  
Office of the Prime Minister  
Ministry of Education  
Ministry of Finance  
Ministry of Agriculture

### **LOCALLY-OWNED PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS**

NCC Management and Development Co.Ltd.  
Siam City Bank  
Bank of Asia  
Bangkok Bank  
Thai Farmers Bank  
Thai Military Bank  
Hua Chiew Hospital  
Assumption University  
The Bangkok Entertainment Co. Ltd.  
Delta Grand Pacific Co.Ltd.  
Pacific Exploration Ltd.  
Patra Thanakij Co.Ltd.  
Savco Wholesale Co.Ltd.  
Lotus Tower Co.Ltd.  
Saha Pattana Pibul Co.Ltd.  
The Siam Industrial Corporation Ltd.  
Siam Cement Co.Ltd.  
Shinawatra Satellite Co.Ltd.  
World Pigment Industry Ltd.  
Thai Nakorn Pattana Co.Ltd.  
Finance One Co. Ltd.  
Osotsapha Teck Heng Yoo Co. Ltd.  
Thai Airways International  
Rangsit Plaza Ltd.  
The Thai Life Insurance Co.Ltd.  
MCC Securities Co.Ltd.  
Bangkok Securities Co.Ltd.  
Bangkok Unitrade Co.Ltd.  
Sinmankhong Insurance Co.Ltd.  
The Nava Leasing Co.Ltd.  
Central Trading Co.Ltd.  
The Thai Investment and Securities Co.Ltd.  
Samitivej Hospital  
Camillian Hospital



Ramkhamhaeng Hospital  
Sara Lee Trading Co.Ltd.  
Siam Steel Group International Ltd.  
Rangsit University  
The Mall Department Store  
Krung Thai Bank Ltd.  
The Nation Publishing Group Ltd.  
Thai Can Paper Co.Ltd.

### **MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS**

Warner-Lambert (Thailand) Co.Ltd.  
Proctor and Gamble (Thailand) Co.Ltd.  
Price Waterhouse Management Consultants Ltd.  
SeaLand Service Inc.Ltd.  
Novotel Lotus Hotel  
Jardine Fleming Securities (Thailand) Ltd.  
Ocean Overseas Containers Ltd.  
Richard Ellis (Thailand) Ltd.  
Siam Perlstop Co.Ltd.  
Loxley (Thailand) Co.Ltd.  
Kimberley Clark (Thailand) Ltd.  
Gillette (Thailand) Ltd.  
East Asiatic (Thailand) Co.Ltd.  
Thai Rayon Co.Ltd.  
Amway (Thailand) Ltd.  
American Express Co.Ltd.  
Lever Brothers (Thailand) Ltd.  
American International Assurance Co.Ltd.  
Shell (Thailand) Ltd.  
Ciba Geigy (Thailand) Ltd.  
The Inchcape Group  
Leo Burnett (Thailand) Ltd.  
Prudential Life Insurance (Thailand) Ltd.  
Phillips Electronics (Thailand) Co.Ltd.  
TNT Express Worldwide (Thailand) Co.Ltd.  
Datamat (Thailand) Co.Ltd.  
Thai Pure Drinks Co.Ltd.  
Hong Kong Bank Ltd.  
Nestle (Thailand) Co.Ltd.  
Cerebos (Thailand) Co.Ltd.  
Adams (Thailand) Co.Ltd.  
Bank of America (Thailand) Ltd.